

**RECOVERY IN THE RESIDENTIAL SCHOOL ABUSE AFTERMATH: A NEW
HEALING PARADIGM**

DEE DIONNE

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Abstract

This qualitative study informs the literature by bringing two perspectives together: the trauma of residential school abuse and the transpersonal viewpoint of healing. A phenomenological hermeneutic approach explored lived experiences of residential school survivors and their families. Transpersonal psychology was introduced as the focus for a new healing paradigm. The research questions ask, “*What has been the lived experience of the trauma of residential school abuse*” and “*How are traditional and non-traditional healing practices mutually applied in the recovery process by individuals who are impacted by the residential school experience*”? Five First Nations co-researchers were interviewed, the data was analyzed, coded, and a thematic analysis was undertaken from which six themes emerged. The results of this study may go on to employ this new healing paradigm to help First Nations people gain spiritual wholeness. Finally, a description and summary of research findings, limitations and implications for counselling were discussed.

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All my relations.....

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CHAPTER I: HEALING TOWARDS WHOLENESS

Introduction

This chapter establishes the groundwork for the importance of the study undertaken and underlines its current significance. Discussion of residential school experiences is fundamental to First Nations people, and presented life story data will clearly illuminate the need for many First Nations survivors to attain spiritual recovery. This chapter also puts forward two research questions and addresses the establishment of residential schools. The author also discusses her role as an implicated researcher (Osborne, 1990) in this study. Finally, operational definitions of *residential school*, *traditional healing practices*, and *non-traditional healing practices* are integrated into the discussion.

The focus of this research is on the recovery process for First Nations people and their family members who suffer trauma, shame, marginalization, and substance abuse in the aftermath of residential school experiences. This research will attempt to bring two perspectives together, abuse and trauma from residential school and transformational healing. Within the current literature there is a plethora of information with regard to transpersonal psychology and the spiritual healing process; there is also information regarding residential school. There is no literature specific to the abuse and trauma of residential school fused with healing from a transpersonal perspective. This particular research will bridge that gap and provide a healing pathway, retooling it in First Nations language, thus, over time, making it more accessible to First Nations people.

For this specific study, healing will mean holistic reparation for Blackfoot First Nations people of Alberta through reclamation of traditions, cultural, language, and familial philosophies rather than through apologies and financial solutions to a 139-year

crisis. Healing will also mean safeguarding spiritual, physical, psychological, and emotional well-being.

The Implicated Researcher

Through a personal history of trauma, I am able to empathize with others who have endured similar experiences, particularly those who have suffered personal losses, endured unspeakable tragedies and who have experienced the many facets of addiction. I was first brought into contact with First Nations culture at the age of six through my grandfather who would take me to visit Chief Walking Buffalo on the Stoney Reservation near Banff, Alberta where we lived at the time. It was on these visits that I became aware of the dilemma of declining First Nations culture and tradition infiltrated by European language and social mechanisms.

Subsequently, what I first thought of as a dilemma soon evolved into my awareness of an ongoing crisis in the existence and perpetuation of First Nations culture as I became cognizant of the full impact of the residential school era and the attempt to assimilate First Nations children into white, European culture. This realization was made more poignant once I had begun to honor the personally lived experiences of my own healing process. I had endured a thirty-five year drug and alcohol-related addiction by the time I made the decision to heal. A subsequent embrace of the transpersonal healing perspective unveiled the prospect of a much higher level of consciousness than previous awareness would allow. Progressing along the recovery journey, I became open to the transcendent state of spiritual awareness and acceptance.

Through personal contact with First Nations people and their experiences while working as a counselor at a shelter for the homeless, I became conscious that the majority

of shelter residents were, and remain, destitute urban First Nations people. The majority of these individuals have been negatively impacted either by first-hand residential school incidents, or from family members' lived experiences. Those whom I was privileged to counsel stated that they wanted a program of recovery that incorporated traditional and non-traditional healing practices, one that would enable them to attain spiritual fulfillment. I am convinced that the unification of traditional and non-traditional healing practices will result in wholeness and spirituality. Transpersonal psychology, the new healing paradigm, is the proposed theoretical point of reference to guide many First Nations residential school survivors towards recovery.

Purpose

The purpose of this research is to contribute to the extant literature on the topic of residential school trauma and to explore therapeutic measures by coalescing traditional and non-traditional healing practices from a transpersonal perspective in order to facilitate First Nations peoples' healing processes. Consequently, the knowledge of what healing means, and what healing practices are, from the perspective of First Nations people can enlighten curative growth. This research will also explore the lived experiences of a number of individuals who attended residential school, as well as the Residential School impact on familial members, who did not attend the schools, but suffer their effects.

Background to Destruction of First Nations Spirituality and Culture: Establishment of Residential School

The industrial schools of Great Britain became the model for residential schools in Canada in 1883 (Miller, 1996; Morissette, 1994); an amendment to the Indian Act in

1894 made attendance for Native children mandatory (O'Hara, 2000). Assimilation of many First Nations people of Canada began in the 1800s when they were absorbed into the governing culture, forced to relinquish their dominant cultural beliefs and practices, and failed to be socialized in their everyday practices. First Nations children were taken from their families and placed in residential schools where the lack of parental nurturing added to their isolation and, over a period of several years, stories of physical and sexual abuse came to light through the stories told by some of the people who attended First Nations residential schools. These residential schools continued to operate in Canada until some began to close in 1947 (O'Hara, 2000). One, however, remained open until as late as 1996.

Research Problem

Once released from the residential schools, many First Nations people were left devoid of cultural or traditional means of coping with every day existence. This caused the residential school survivors, and ultimately the following generations, to remain lost within the dominant culture. To add to this, traditional land was taken from the First Nations people and they were forced to exist on reservations. Today the 'essence' or 'spirit' of the people is lacking and the associated human and social costs remain high. Chronic substance abuse and addictions are also a part of the legacy of residential school (Claes & Clifton, 1998) and this has become prevalent in the lives of many survivors. Along with other factors such as poverty, the reservations as a prison-like environment, the loss of spirituality and culture along with other pain, many residential school attendees, and subsequently their children, are caught up in a cycle of chronic substance abuse and addiction. Now, this population itself has identified a need to embrace the

shared use of traditional and non-traditional healing practices on an ever-increasing basis to deal with their difficulties.

Research Questions

The research question is two-fold, “*What has been the lived experience of the trauma of residential school abuse?*” and “*How are traditional and non-traditional healing practices mutually applied in the recovery process by individuals who are impacted by the residential school experience?*”? These questions were posed in order to gain understanding into the lived experiences of trauma relating to the residential school experience as well as how healing practices are used by these survivors in their recovery process in order to deal with the complexities of their spiritual, emotional, physical, and psychological health. In reaching this goal, the focal point was on integrating traditional and non-traditional healing practices with the current population of living family members of residential school survivors. From this research, benefits for First Nations people will be that it will open up a dialogue on certain aspects of their history on a new level as well as be able to acknowledge their spirituality, and cultural traditions through an amalgamated healing process (Assembly of First Nations, 1994; Claes & Clifton, 1998; Morrissette, 1994).

Definitions

Under explicit government policy residential schools began in the 1800s and were operated by the Methodist, Presbyterian, Roman Catholic, and Anglican Churches on behalf of the Canadian colonial government; their intent was to ‘Christianize’, ‘civilize’ and ‘educate’ the First Nations population of Canada. According to the treaty agreements, children were forced into residential schools where they were separated from their

familial environments sometimes for years at a time; siblings within the same institution were not permitted to communicate with each other. Dion-Stout and Kipling (2003) report that corporal punishment and humiliation were the norm; Within residential schools, First Nations people lost their culture, their traditions, and their language, but above all, they lost their spirituality.

Traditional healing practices are defined as containing the spiritual element which Morissette (1994) regards as essential and are conducted in a time-honored fashion. First Nations peoples' spiritual traditional healing practices include, but are not limited to, Medicine Wheel, sweat lodge, and Powwow. It is within a balance of spiritual, physical, psychological, emotional, and mental holism where healing takes place (Assembly of First Nations, 1994; Morissette, 1994).

Non-traditional healing practices include one-on-one counseling, the use of psychotherapy and family counseling sessions, (Morissette, 1994) rather than community healing circles. Here an individual can work on sensitive issues and express feelings about personal experiences in a private environment allowing the traditional and non-traditional healing practices to take place (Morissette, 1994). Through amalgamation of traditional and non-traditional healing practices, many First Nations people will be able to restore their spiritual and cultural balance in a holistic manner.

Significance

This research is significant in that it will bridge the gap between two perspectives, abuse and trauma in residential school and the transpersonal perspective of healing from those abuses. It will also provide information about little-known healing practices, and how a blend of traditional healing practices with non-traditional healing practices, can be

used to assist First Nations individuals to move past their own residential school experiences or the effects of those institutions on the lives of their descendents It will also have an impact on the broader population. With the realization of communal and individual holistic healing, (Assembly of First Nations, 1994) all four levels of human development – spiritual, mental, physical and psychological – will be enhanced by inquiring into the questions of, *‘What has been the lived experience of the trauma of residential school abuse?’* and *‘How are traditional and non-traditional healing practices mutually applied in the recovery process by individuals who are impacted by the residential school experience?’*

Chapter Summary

In Chapter One, the reader was introduced to the purpose and significance of this research. A brief description of the background into the destruction of the First Nations people’s spirituality and culture was given along with the belief that transpersonal psychology offers a new healing paradigm for First Nations residential school survivors. Definitions of residential school, traditional healing practices and non-healing practices were explained and finally, an introduction to the implicated researcher was revealed.

Chapter Two will focus on the review of the literature pertaining to the phenomenon under study and establishes the theoretical framework for the research. First Nations peoples’ residential school traumas and the need for healing will be discussed and a transpersonal perspective on healing will be provided. Almaas’ (2000) model of self-realization, or *Diamond Approach*, (Almaas, 2000) will be the main focus of discussion. In Chapter Three a discussion of research methodology will be offered in detail and Chapter Four provides the reader with a thematic analysis derived from the personal

interviews of five co-researchers. Chapter Five is the final chapter and will discuss the themes, limitations and counselling implications of this research.

CHAPTER II: A REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

The search for optimal healing spiritually, culturally, and traditionally, will be examined in this review of the literature. The reader will be systematically led through the following pages commencing with the exploration of the *pre-colonial community, colonialism: havoc, devastation, disease, and death, and the historical development of residential schools in Canada. Ancestral Ghosts: Historic Trauma, Grief, Guilt, Shame and Anger* will be discussed along with *Defensive Strategies: Dissociating, Minimizing, Denial*. Next, this review of the literature will explore the *Traditional and Non-traditional Healing Practices* used by First Nations residential school survivors and at this point the introduction to transpersonal psychology will be brought forth with the *Realization of the Essential Identity – A Therapeutic Model for Intergenerational Change*. Within these boundaries, Almaas' (2000) Stages of transpersonal growth are revealed through the *Diamond Approach* (Almaas, 2000). *Freedom from Mind, Richness in Being – The Healing Path* addresses the holistic paradigm that considers the connected reality of which we are all a part. Transpersonal perspectives of Wilber, Jung, and Davis are referred to within this discourse as a foundation to understanding spiritual transcendence; however, the prevailing theoretical framework will be that of Almaas (2000).

For most First Nations survivors, reparative measures for the traumatic experiences endured in Canadian residential schools would seem impossible. The majority of First Nations people, crossing over from the non-realized self into a dimension of self-actualization elicit trepidation blended with expectancy. Fear of opening up a Pandora's

Box of experiences and revealing all the ugliness from their historic suffering strikes a resonant chord with a great many First Nations people - they will have to relive all the horrific events of their sexual and physical abuses in order to get past their traumatic frozen moments; this is not something all First Nations people are willing or able to do. On the other hand, for those people who choose to take the transcendent path towards wholeness, the expectancy of an improved future in the curative process may provide a clear reference point from which to start their healing processes.

Traditional healing practices which were exercised prior to Canadian settlement, as well as the non-traditional healing practices which have woven their way into current day, will be included in this discourse. Medicine Wheel, healing circles, Powwow, and vision quests will be mentioned along with traditional healing practices of various psychologists including Almaas (2000), Duran (2006), Jung, (1966, 1971), and Satir (1991). The transpersonal therapeutic model of healing which Almaas (2000) proposes holistically unites traditional and non-traditional healing practices and it presents itself as a model which lends itself more to the transpersonal development of individuals who choose to take this particular journey towards spiritual wholeness.

Pre-Colonial Community

Prior to the European encroachment, cultural and traditional narratives, healing circles, Powwow, Sundance, family stories, metaphors, and symbols were developed by Canada's First Nations people and material and spiritual needs were met by using the resources of the "natural world that surrounded them" (The Canadian Indian, 1986, p. 8); not including the First Nations people, other living creatures were the animals which roamed the lands and were hunted for food and clothing materials.

Spiritual and Cultural Practices

Spiritual and cultural practices for some people arose from the relationship with their environment and were incorporated into their hunting practices. Traditionally, prior to killing an animal, such as a bear, the hunter would sing or talk to the bear assuring it that the only reason it was going to be killed was to provide food and clothing for the hunter's family (The Canadian Indian, 1986). After the hunt and as a mark of respect, the skull of dead bears and/or beavers would be cleaned and placed high on a pole or up in a tree "where dogs could not defile them" (The Canadian Indian, 1986, p.13). Deeper spiritual reinforcement would be provided individually to young adolescent men as they would set out on personal vision-quests to seek a lifetime guardian spirit, one that would be there for them during hunting and other activities. The guardian spirit would also provide each young adolescent man with his own personal war songs, dances, and would tell them what amulets they should wear during their vision-quests (The Canadian Indian, 1986).

The Role of Elders

The wisdom and experience of the First Nations elders was held in high esteem during pre-colonial times; elders became members of their individual cultural societies and passed down healing practices, medicine bundles, stories and established practices to the younger generation. Customarily First Nations people of the Plains worshipped the Sun, the Thunderbird and Napiwa, the Old Man of the Dawn; these were "considered to be the greatest sacred ones" (The Canadian Indian, 1986, p. 26). Traditionally, Medicine bundles were held by specific members of the tribe and the bundles contained sacred objects, magical amulets, wrapped in hide. It was believed that the Medicine bundles

gave the owner high status and that it would bring wealth and good fortune (The Canadian Indian, 1986).

First Nations Philosophies

Healing and spiritual philosophies included the sweat lodge which provided ritual purification, and ceremonial dances which for the most part reflected the cultural emphasis on hunting and warfare. These particular dances were performed at summer tribal gatherings but one dance, the most dramatic annual dance, was the Blackfoot Sun Dance. The Sun Dance paid homage to the Great Spirit and involved only a few men who fasted, prayed and danced (The Canadian Indian, 1986). Overall, First Nations Canadians had no distinction between the spiritual world and the natural world (Ray, 1996) prior to contact with Europeans. They believed that the world they lived in was governed by “a panoply of spirits [and] accordingly they sought out the good will and help of these powers by showing them respect through a variety of public and private ritual practices” (Ray, 1996, p. 32, 33). Ritual healing practices were learned from a head Medicine man, an expert at using herbal remedies. Chief George Barker (as cited in Ray, A., 1996) remarked that a special plot of ground with a variety of herbs on it was protected by an enclosure being built around it and “the head Medicine man would pray to reveal which illnesses could be cured from the roots of these herbs” (p. 36). Chief Barker explained that the Medicine men were always careful to place tobacco where the roots had been pulled out as this was very important to soothe the spirits (Ray, 1996).

Decline of Traditional Medicine and Healing

Today the effectiveness of traditional Native medicine is only just being recognized for its value and there is awareness that European immigrants would have taken

“centuries to appreciate the knowledge that the various nations had accumulated through careful observation over thousands of years” (Ray, 1996, p. 36). White settlers dismissed the significance of traditional healing and spiritual practices of First Nations people as superstition; they believed their own Western science to be superior. The European settler’s Western science could not combat the epidemic illnesses that they unconsciously brought with them when they came to Canada. For that matter, traditional healing practices could not combat the diseases either and the “havoc the new diseases wrought would ultimately undermine the position of traditional healers and spiritual leaders in Native society and make it easier for Christian missionaries to make inroads” (Ray, 1996, p. 37).

Colonialism: Havoc, Devastation, Disease, and Death

Up to this point, the discourse has provided a brief overview of the spiritual and traditional healing practices prior to European invasion, colonization, and assimilation. What follows is a brief account of some of the devastation, havoc, and diseases that befell Canada’s original inhabitants.

Colonization eroded not only the traditional, healing practices, spiritual customs and physical health of the First Nations people, the colonizers consciously contained them on small parcels of reservation land; this confinement seriously impeded the emotional well-being of the First Nations people.

Havoc

The strangers arrived in eastern Canada and over time the visits became so well established that by 1534 First Nations people were bartering with the Europeans; “knives, beads and hatchets were traded for furs” (The Canadian Indian, 1986, p. 49). Trading

continued and by 1608 the settlement of Quebec was established; “virtually no aspect of Indian life remained untouched by contact with Europeans” (The Canadian Indian, 1986, p. 50). Full scale assimilation of the First Nations people into the French culture was undertaken by the Jesuit missionaries that followed Champlain to the ‘New World’ in eastern Canada. The missionaries had developed plans to remove First Nations children from their homes and to “educate them in live-in schools” (The Canadian Indian, 1986, p. 51). At this point in history, that plan did not work; the children went back to live with their families.

On the northwest plains, “where the sky takes care of the earth and the earth takes care of the sky” (as cited in Dickason, 1992, p. 74), Europeans described the western prairies as a vast “sea of grass and scattered islands of woods” (Ray, 1996, p. 12); the flat lands teemed with buffalo where between 1878 and 1885 they were hunted to extinction. The buffalo had always been a mainstay in the lives of Plains people, sustaining them with food and clothing for extended periods of time. *Head Smashed in Buffalo Jump* in Southern Alberta, a jump site where First Nations people ran buffalo to their death is more than 5000 years old and was used until 1873. Because of the vastness of the site itself, apart from the jump, the area was also used for intertribal events involving traditional spiritual healing practices (Dickason, 1992).

Devastation, Disease, and Death

When cultures collided, explorers, traders, settlers, and missionaries devastated the lives and lifestyles of the First Nations people of Canada with their lack of respect for the culture and traditions of the people and with a plethora of diseases that they inadvertently brought with them. Over a period of time it was soon realized that shaman’s medicines

were actually futile against the plagues inflicted upon their people; traditional healing in sweat lodges did nothing but merely serve as a location to pass along the diseases and infect others. French missionaries enthusiastically maintained the futility of the shamans and their traditional medicines and mocked their impotence. The medicine men could not calm the ravages of diseases such as smallpox, diphtheria, typhoid, measles, influenza and a host of venereal infections; their people had no immunity against them – they never had to develop resistance to diseases before the Europeans arrived. Nevertheless, the shaman's inability to cure the sick and dying people through traditional healing further demoralized the long-established spiritual foundation of First Nation life.

Encroachment of Europeans

Said (1994) stated that colonialism is apparent through power arrangements such as those which worked in the 1800s and which still work to control native lands and inhabitants. Chow (1993, as cited in Weenie, n.d.) explains that power is gained by one culture prevailing over another so that identities become marginalized and are viewed from a racial perspective; assimilation has produced cultural hegemony of First Nations people. The colonizers were depicted as the “advanced civilization while the colonized were depicted as backward nations” (Said, 1994, p. 114). The initiation of residential schools in Canada was one method used to crush the culture of First Nations people in the name of colonialism; other methods of subjugation included armed conflict as well as the implementation of the Indian Act of 1876. First Nations people were dehumanized and their spirits destroyed as the result of European assimilation. Assimilation became the mordant formation of the ailing present day culture.

Increasing encroachment by Europeans onto Canadian soil caused continuous harmful impacts on the cultural, spiritual and traditional ways of life for First Nations people; “...it was quite clear even then that the notions, ideas, values, perceptions, concepts, customs, habits, practices, conventions, outlooks – the entire tradition and way of life – that they embraced were different from those held by the newcomers” (Ross, 1992, p. vii). Furthermore, European expropriation of reserve land was made less difficult due to amendments to the Indian Act in 1905 and again in 1911. During the early 20th century, the federal ‘Indian Policy’ pressed firmly to have First Nations people ejected from their native lands and to promote assimilation. First Nations people living in the Prairie Provinces were subjected to a pass system whereby if they wanted to leave the reservation for any length of time they had to ask for written permission from an Indian agent and a pass either was or was not provided. The Indian Act of 1867 and all the indignities that followed “profoundly affected the social, spiritual and emotional psyche of generations of people to this day” (France, McCormick, & del Carmen Rodriguez, 2003, p. 2). It can be argued that of the wholesale disregard for the First Nations peoples’ way of life and culture, the most heinous exploit of European control was abducting First Nations children from their families and homes and forcibly placing them in residential schools.

Historical Development of Residential Schools in Canada

Residential schools were conceived by the racially supremacist church and state and operated in Canada from 1894 until the late 1996. Over a period of 102 years, First Nations children were mandated to attend residential schools to become “re-educated to fit a European model” (Legacy of Hope Foundation, 2003, p. 17). That which the

churches and government referred to as ‘providing education’ was merely the strategy used to apprehend First Nations children with anticipation of absorbing them into Canadian culture thus stripping them of their traditional identities. In reality, within the residential schools education was used as a “political weapon” (Chrisjohn, Young, & Maraun, 2005, p.81), bent in agreeable fashion in order to connect the Church and Government. These live-in schools were “one of the more odious strategies used by the Canadian Government to assimilate First Nations people and the consequences of this strategy are still haunting the government and aboriginal people today” (France, McCormick, & del Carmen Rodriguez, 2003, p. 4).

Eradication of Culture

A politically based source, *The Truth Commission into Genocide in Canada* (2001) provides an extreme perspective on the issue of eradication of First Nations culture. So devastating is the impact of the residential school system on many generations of First Nations people who suffer its destructive consequences that some literature equates the policies of forcible removal of children from their parents and culture (Miller, 1996); their treatment within the residential schools and subsequent trauma and feelings of helplessness and even meaninglessness, that some literature has equated the whole process, events, and experience as being equivalent to the actions of the Nazi government in the 1930s and 1940s in its attempt to exterminate the Jewish people (Truth Commission, 2001). Using the same terminology and language that we have become accustomed to in condemning Adolph Hitler’s ‘final solution’ to the Jewish question, such literature, while extreme in its tone, nevertheless demonstrates the depth of some critics towards the residential school system and its after effects.

Residential School Abuse

As though non-existent approximately 50,000 victims, all innocent children, were beaten and maltreated “[they] have vanished, as have their corpses” (Truth Commission into Genocide in Canada, 2001, p. 6). Not only are the 50,000 deceased children of the residential schools casualties, but so are the survivors and their families; The Truth Commission into Genocide (2001) states “in 1999, United Nations human rights groups described the First Nations peoples’ social conditions of today as that of ‘a colonized people barely on the edge of survival, with all the trappings of a third-world society’” (p. 6).

Copious numbers of individuals have suffered through appalling experiences at residential school and many are barely willing or even able to share their stories at this time. Most First Nations people who suffered at residential school need to acquire a complete understanding of the issues they still endure; the next step beyond that is for them to be willing to experience a healing process that will relieve them of their wounded selves. By means of traditional and non-traditional healing practices applied in unison, First Nations people can begin to heal by understanding the depth of their trauma, guilt, grief, shame, and anger. By using a culturally sensitive approach to healing, it is expected that families and individuals will be able to start the recovery process and finally overcome their extensive historic trauma. Discerning support and perspective of the current issues that plague the First Nations communities is vital to this. Through the blending of traditional and non-traditional healing practices there can be greater assurance that each individual will be in harmony with his or her surroundings.

Ancestral Ghosts: Historic Trauma, Grief, Guilt, Shame and Anger

Those psychological impacts resulting from the residential school policies can be identified as trauma. Trauma is referred to by *The Canadian Oxford Paperback Dictionary* (2000) as an emotional shock following a stressful or psychologically disturbing experience that sometimes leads to a lifetime of long-term neurosis. Adding deeper meaning to this definition, psychoanalyst, Sigmund Freud, defined trauma as “a breach in the protective barrier against stimuli leading to feelings of overwhelming helplessness” (Rowell, 2005, as cited in Levine, p.197) and in a resource manual written for the Aboriginal Healing Foundation, Chansonneuve (2005) explains psychological trauma as, “an affliction of the powerless” (p. 49). Wurmser (2003) refers to the anxieties connected to trauma as “the on-rushing torrent of feelings of panic, of guilt and shame that evoke the experience of an abyss calling out to abyss” (p.300); the massive despair and sense of ‘broken reality’ (Wurmser, 2003) give way to interpersonal trauma, an attack on the self, involving the “typical interpersonal stressors [of] exploitation, harassment, abuse and humiliation” (Simon, 2002, p. 31). Grief can be considered a natural defense mechanism that assists persons in handling difficult situations surrounding momentous losses particularly of an interpersonal nature (Bowins, 2004). Guilt is said to occur from “the self’s negative evaluation of its behavior [and] shame is said to arise from the self’s negative evaluation of the self” (Irwin, 1998, p. 238; Wells & Jones, 2000). Many First Nations people are presumed to hold onto feelings of guilt and shame from the alleged abusive conditions they endured at residential school. Couched within the emotions of grief, guilt, and shame is anger, a common place reaction of

natural energy which all at once rises up within an individual (Maloney, 2002). A great number of First Nations people display anger in this emotional sense.

Trauma: Continuing to Experience the Torment

Interpersonal trauma is prevalent in the lives of many First Nations survivors and consequently their families; it is evident that reprocessing the patterns of historic or intergenerational trauma and dysfunction must cease (Lane Jr., Bopp, Bopp, & Norris, 2002). In order to initiate the healing process it is essential to be culturally sensitive and understand the survivors' anguish and torment of residential school issues. Rowell (2005) states, "The loss of trust, self-esteem, identity, feeling, and a variety of other losses can affect a victim to varying degrees. Interpersonal trauma is harmful because a person's trust in fellow humans is severely damaged" (Rowell, 2005, p.2). Responses to interpersonal trauma are diverse because there are various factors that manipulate each person's 'essence' and 'beingness'. Walker (2004, p. 4, as cited in Rowell, 2005) stated, "People grow through action in relationship with others" (p.2). This is what Rowell (2005) refers to as "one of the central tenets of psychological models" (p.2) yet the common thread that pervades the lives of many First Nations people who suffer interpersonal psychic trauma is the loss of trust among their fellow human beings (Freedman, 2006; O'Hara & Treble, 2000; Rowell, 2005; Simon, 2002).

Interpersonal trauma particularly affects families and friends, causing the traumatized persons to force themselves into isolation which can then lead to self abuse and chronic substance abuse (Assembly of First Nations, 1994; Claes & Clifton, 1998; Dion Stout & Kipling, 2003; Hylton, Bird, Eddy, Rowell, 2005; Sinclair & Stenerson, 2002; Wesley-Esquimaux & Smolewski, 2004). An example of this is *Residential School Syndrome*, a

name given to this trauma by clinicians and refers to a “distinct cluster of problems and behaviours” (Corrado & Cohen, 2003, p. 23) due to the severity of individual trauma suffered by individuals from attending residential schools in Canada. This traumatic condition is related to PTSD according to clinicians and its primary characteristics involve powerful silence and profound emotional trepidation (Corrado & Cohen, 2003; Robertson, 2006; Sochting, Corrado, Cohen, Ley & Brasfield, 2007). Deficient parenting skills and excessive substance abuse have also been noted as characteristic symptoms of this condition as well (Brasfield, 2001; Claes & Clifton, 1998).

Psychic traumatic experiences endured across time may cause “loss of a social self” (Wesley-Esquimaux & Smolewski, 2004, p.66), giving way to learned helplessness, affecting an individual’s motivation, cognition and emotion. Learned helplessness may result in countless numbers of First Nations people attributing social failures to their personal inner causes; they may even hold themselves responsible for their own vulnerability. (Wesley-Esquimaux & Smolewski, 2004) Levels of locus of control can become diminished and numbers of First Nations people may think that bad things happened to them because they deserved it; on the other hand they may think that what happened to them was beyond their control and they could do nothing about the circumstances they found themselves in (Wesley-Esquimaux & Smolewski, 2004). Because of experiencing trauma, large numbers of First Nations people may believe that the world is an unsafe place even though they do not always appear to live in a state of fear (Freedman, 2006). The historical psychic trauma, however, continues as “a relentless causal agent” (Wesley-Esquimaux & Smolewski, 2004, p. 65).

Freedman (2006) distinguishes two sides of the consequences of psychic trauma; one side is the “shattered self” (Freedman, 2006, p.104) and the other is the “shattered world-view” (Freedman, 2006, p.104). Many First Nations people who attended residential school acknowledge having lived through psychologically disturbing experiences but it seems that because of deficient evidence, the beliefs of the incidents are reinterpreted not as genuine terms of a “shattered world-view” (Freedman, 2006, p. 105), but to a certain extent with regard to emotional reactions to the “shattered self” (Freedman, 2006, p. 105). Some reported acts of violence against First Nations people while attending residential school has been noted in the anecdotal literature. Personal narratives are germane to this study, as anecdotes may provide the impetus to explore a theory of physical abuse significant to understanding possible psychic trauma of some First Nations people who experienced alleged residential school abuse; this understanding will affect family members living in the aftermath of residential school experiences as well and assist them in dealing with their perceived senses of loss.

Grief and Loss

Grief may well be characterized as a variety of things such as an emotion, a psychological state relating to depression, or, as in this study, a reaction by First Nations people to spiritual and cultural losses (Bowins, 2004; Chansonneuve, 2005; Dion Stout & Kipling, 2003; Hylton, Bird, Eddy, Sinclair & Stenerson, 2002; Maloney, 2002; Olson, 2003; Wesley-Esquimaux & Smolewski, 2004;). Cultural, spiritual, religious, and language-based losses are just such losses and they have been devastating for many First Nations people since the inception of residential schools in Canada. For instance, profound significance was attached to the symbols and customs of First Nations people

(Chansonneuve, 2005; Dion Stout & Kipling, 2003; Hylton, Bird, Eddy, Sinclair & Stenerson, 2002; Wesley-Esquimaux & Smolewski, 2004); however these traditions and customs were not allowed to be practiced in residential schools and many of the people fear that it will take several generations to reclaim their ancestors' ways (Olson, 2003). This loss is grieved by countless numbers and they express their feelings as being "painful" (Olson, 2003, p. 113). Grief is a difficult emotion to let go of and people carry it around inside them for years (Maloney, 2002). In the same way, some First Nations people carry with them unresolved grief with regard to their residential school experiences, having lost contact with family members, friends, and cultural involvements and many continue to grieve the "loss of a once-held sense of self"(Cerney, 1990, p.781).

Unresolved, or ambiguous, loss (Boss, 1999; Fearon & Mansell, 2001) can be what some First Nations people who attended residential school continue to experience. Along with their cultural, spiritual, religion, and language based losses, alleged 'parental' maltreatment from residential school staff may have caused an irreconcilable incongruous approach-avoidance paradox leading to a collapse in organized attachment behavior (Boss, 1999; Fearon & Mansell, 2001). When the children as young as five and six years of age were taken from their parents and placed in residential schools, familial contact was severed. It would be like somebody leaving without saying good-bye (Boss, 1999), hearing unanswered questions, 'are they still alive?' or, 'will we ever see each other again?' Moving past these ambiguous losses can be extremely difficult unless counselors within the dominant culture can appreciate the enormity of the losses known to the First Nations people (Olson, 2003) and implement a program of holistic healing (Assembly of First Nations, 1994; Kirmeyer et al., 2003; Morrisette, 1994).

Guilt and Shame

Most First Nations residential school survivors were unable to resist the powerful measures of the dominant culture and perhaps in a desperate need to be loved, First Nations children may have taken on “a sense of responsibility or guilt for the abuse” (Irwin, 1998, p.239). Reportedly, most children who suffer abuse are commonly blamed and denigrated by the abusers and may feel incapable of resisting the abuse, resulting in self-blame (Irwin, 1998; Zupancic & Kreidler, 1998). Eventually victims learn from others that the abuse is not normal, which causes the victim to view their behavior as shameful (Harper & Arias, 2004; Irwin, 1998). The feeling of shame has the “demonic potential to encompass our whole personality” (Bradshaw, 2005, p. 21) wherein “a person can come to believe that his whole self is fundamentally flawed and defective” (Bradshaw, 2005, p. 21). Bradshaw (2005) explains that such a person does not have “his healthy guilt available to him” (p. 21). Healthy guilt allows the individual to acknowledge that they perhaps made a mistake but they can also acknowledge that they are able to repair the damage. However, when unhealthy guilt pervades, rather than the individual thinking they *made* a mistake, they would cite themselves as the mistake (Bradshaw, 2005). At this point the individual’s guilt has become neurotic and it becomes “immorality shame” (Bradshaw, 2005, p. 21) and further becomes internalized toxic shame.

Internalized toxic shame is extremely destructive if left untreated and it “lethally disgraces us to the point where we have no limits or boundaries” (Bradshaw, 2005, p. 22). Toxic shame is multigenerational, existing through one generation then passing on through the next and so on. Most First Nations people, having experienced residential

school abuses, are fraught with toxic shame; they are unable to liberate themselves from the burden of such shame and unwittingly pass it on, along with their “spiritual bankruptcy” (Bradshaw, 2005, p. 1), to their family members.

Due to forced service to another reality (Lucas, 2004), specifically the dominant Canadian culture, it is asserted that a great many First Nations people feel that they have abandoned themselves, their culture, their traditions, their language, and their spirituality; for this they feel guilt, shame and ultimately, anger.

Anger

A state of guilt and shame may induce feelings of anger (Irwin, 1998), however venting anger may not always be appropriate (Bushman, 2002). Individuals may be forced to contain all affect (Irwin, 1998) and these suppressed affects will remain unsettled and the shamed and guilty self will remain separate from the other ‘self’ (Irwin, 1998). Leifer (1999) states that anger is a type of suffering that causes the angry individual as well as their victim[s] to endure pain; it can be aroused by external or internal events or a combination of both (Deffenbacher, 1999). It is possible that many First Nations people deliberate on angry thoughts about perceived historical injustices done to them directly or to their families, which exacerbates ensuing anger (Deffenbacher, 1999). One may conclude from this as it applies to the trauma suffered by First Nations peoples that their feelings of emptiness serve to fuel the anger as well as the grief, guilt and shame surrounding the cultural and spiritual losses that many First Nations people feel. Anger is most likely to surface when people evaluate lived experiences that they feel they never should have had to endure and with which they are

helpless to deal with in their current states of psychological, spiritual, emotional, and physical health.

Revealing the profundity of historic trauma, grief, guilt, shame, and anger, while painful, is essential if we are to invite those searching for spiritual freedom to forge ahead on the healing journey to the recovery of spirituality and culture. Emotional residue from residential schools gives way to daily battles with historic trauma, grief, guilt, shame, anger as well as substance abuse thus creating barriers to recovery and freedom. Some of the barriers can include familial relationships some of which have resulted in domestic violence and the inability to raise children. The majority of individuals who have endured the horrors of residential school report that substance abuse, a symptom of their problems is prevalent in their lives and in the lives of their intergenerationally impacted family members. Intrinsic yearning to claim culture and traditions which were held hostage for so long is revealed in the First Nations peoples' journey towards healing and self-seeking, preparing to rid their 'beings' of old expectations and unconstructive energies, taking the steps necessary to experience a higher state of consciousness (Satir, 1991). By lingering in a psychological state where the 'bad thinking never changes, defense mechanisms tend to be put into practice and become a regulating method of dealing with historical injustices.

Defensive Strategies: Dissociating, Minimizing, Denial

The following section will discuss each of the above mentioned defensive strategies in as much depth as is covered in the extant literature on the subject of defensive strategies and denial. A relationship will be made between victimized First Nations individuals and their families may have experienced the *Psychological Splits, Trauma, Guilt, Grief,*

Shame, and Anger and the etiological connection to their current addictive disorders and related to residential school experiences.

In a search for transcendence and wholeness, it is emphasized that there is a holistic paradigm that claims that “there is one interconnected reality of which we are all a part and of which we can all be aware...[and]...it invites exploration of the role of dissociative process...”(Edge, L. 2004, p. 156). Edge (1998, 2001) proposed “Spectrum of Dissociation” (p. 156) wherein “Pathological Dissociation” (p.158) is regarded as embracing “the rigid compartmentalization of constituents of self such that awareness is not permitted to encompass them simultaneously; as awareness shifts within these distinct compartments, instability of self-concept arises” (p.158).

Psychological Splits (Dissociating)

Psychological defense mechanisms and coping techniques involve dissociating (psychological splitting); minimizing, denial, and projection are viewed by some mental health researchers as typical protective coping mechanisms used by adults and children who have lived through insufferable experiences (Bowins, 2004; Candel, I., Merckelback, H., & Kuijpers, M., 2003; Gerlach, n.d; Irwin, H.J., 1998). In order to survive, Gerlach (n.d.) states that individuals “detach or dissociate from mental + emotional + physical agony...” (p.4). Dissociating permits emotional absenteeism on behalf of many First Nations people who want to ignore traumatic details of their past (Bowins, 2004). Self-consciousness is defended as being “contaminated by overwhelming pain, humiliation, and feelings of helplessness” (Apitzch, 1996, as cited in Candel, et al., 2003, Dion Stout & Kipling, 2003). When trauma, such as many reported residential school abuses occurs, individuals may become extremely adept at

psychologically splitting, or dissociating, and may continue to do so whenever unpleasant circumstances arise. For example, when a traumatic event occurs, an individual may rationalize the event, then store it away in memory; over time more critical events take place, individually each one is rationalized and stored. Crystallized emotions (Nixon, Personal Communication, 2003) as they are known as help to provide the psychic defense needed in order not to have to face unpleasant issues, or ones that will give rise to further pain and suffering (Nixon, Personal Communication, 2003). Individuals who dissociate as a means of coping with traumatic experiences may be at risk to do so with inconsequential stressors as well (Candel et al., 2003); psychological splitting thus becomes the coping mechanism for all stressors.

Some First Nations people, in order to make their lives more pleasant, internalize a positive spin onto their negative experiences. Abuse of substances such as alcohol, cocaine, marijuana, and methamphetamines aid in dissociative behavior and help to cognitively distort the negative experiences into positive ones if only for a short while. Substance abuse, a residential school legacy, (Claes & Clifton, 1998) appears to be the “basic human motive” (Bowins, 2004, p. 17) for many First Nations people to achieve an altered state of consciousness. These cognitive distortions create scenarios that are easier to live with, regardless of the psychic war raging internally, and eventually cause the individuals to ‘own’ the more positive experience.

Minimizing

Minimizing is a common defense mechanism often used by some First Nations people. It allows them to believe that a past insufferable experience or even a “current horror isn’t that bad” (Gerlach, n.d., p.4). Through the familiar behavior of minimizing,

cognitive distortions permit memory repression of historically painful events; individuals negate the current painful experiences, and seemingly become hopelessly trapped within a ‘false self’ (Gerlach, nd; Wilkinson, 2003). For some First Nations people it seems less complicated for them to repress historical pain and subsequently even deny the occurrences of such pain.

Denial

Ranging across the spectrum from ‘I can’t believe it’ to ‘it didn’t happen’, denial can place a protective shroud over those who escape from reality, thus numbing the pain of authenticity. Denial of overwhelming historical circumstances, such as some of the reported residential school experiences, leads to the repression of memories or even to the fact that the difficulty dealing with the circumstances “isn’t even happening at all” (Gerlach, n.d., p.4). Some First Nations survivors and family members have refuted that their current day addictions are connected to the experiences they endured at residential school; Gerlach (n.d.) claims that their denial may be due to the fear of having to deal with the repressed painful experiences of the past and having to get in touch with reticent emotions in order to move towards essence in recovery. Denial has been described as a “degenerative disease that in the end results in a distorted reality, a false perspective and a less than spiritually enhancing condition” (Wagamese, 1998, p.1).

Purportedly, in residential schools, the dominant culture removed that “preciousness that is [the] essential core” (Almaas, 2000, p. 318), which gave way to internal feelings of self-betrayal for many First Nations people; as a result, the foundation was established for these people to fit into the idea of what dominant culture said they should be. Today, living with emotions of self-betrayal, self-hatred, grief, anger, guilt and shame, a great

many First Nations people who lived through the residential school experience, and subsequently those who live in the aftermath, have abandoned and hidden their “most precious nature” (Almaas, 2000, p. 319), thus denying their betrayal to self and all but disregarding it completely (Almass, 2000). Denial can cause deep psychological wounds, particularly “narcissistic wounding, such as exploitation, harassment, abuse, rape and torture” (Simon, 2002, p. 31); it can cause trauma and is perceived by those who experienced such wounds to “contain strong interpersonal element[s]” (Simon, 2002, p. 31).

Traditional and Non-Traditional Healing Practices

There have been noteworthy gaps in the literature with regard to what ‘healing practices’ are apart from the generalizeable considerations from outside a counseling perspective (Assembly of First Nations, 1994; Claes & Clifton, 1998; Gibson, 1999). Traditional and non-traditional healing practices can provide appropriate care for the First Nations residential school survivors. Clinicians who already practice traditional and non-traditional healing practices choose not to treat First Nations individuals in isolation (Lewis & Ho, 1989; Morissette, 1994; Thomason, 1991); they ensure they include family, friends, neighbours, and community within the healing process, permitting social inclusion and integration. Collective healing enhances the strengthening of “ethnocultural identity” (Kirmayer, L., Simpson, C., & Cargo, M., 2003, p.S15) and the empowerment of communities produces broad effects of well-being among the population (Kirmayer et al., 2003). Confronting the legacy of residential school injustices (Aboriginal Healing Foundation, 2002; Kirmayer, Brass, & Tait, 2000; Kirmayer et al., 2003) is central to healing and the Aboriginal Healing Foundation (2002) claims that First Nations people

are beginning more and more to seek out mutually applied traditional and non-traditional healing practices.

The mind, the body and the brain are all associated therefore if one of the components is out of balance, all will be out of balance. Traditional healing for this negative balance includes Medicine Wheel, Powwow, and healing circle whereas the non-traditional healing approaches include Cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT), somatic therapy, and EMDR (Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing), all of which are effective. Residential school trauma included physical, sexual, emotional, psychological, and cultural abuse meted out with no preferences. van der Kolk and McFarlane (2007) explain that the experience of living with trauma can readily change the social, biological and psychological balance in an individual's life; those experiences overtake the psyche, making it impossible for an individual to realize and acknowledge what is happening in their day to day lives. With regard to the devastation that trauma places biologically on an individual, van der Kolk and McFarlane (2007) explain that trauma affects many strata of the human being.

As well, CBT (Corey, 2005) assists individuals in their ability to consciously obtain and use coping skills when harmful situations occur. The behaviour changes the way an individual thinks, feels and acts as well as giving the individual an insight as to how the behaviours impact others. Somatic therapy is based on understanding how trauma affects the physical body. Trauma psychologist Peter Levine (1997) believes that after trauma has taken place, the mind and body suffer a "freezing" (p.12) experience. This kind of traumatic experience would most likely have taken place after a sexual or physical assault on a child in residential school wherein during the traumatic event itself the child was

unable to move or think clearly. EMDR is a non-traditional therapy used to bring the individual into the present moment and to leave the place of trauma. Shapiro (2001) explains that EMDR focuses on internal responses and invites the individual to recall the incident of trauma without experiencing shame or fear. This empowers the individual because they are then able to say that they did alright and survived the situation and grew to adulthood. It also introduces a positive change to an individual's negative internalized self-talk and thoughts allowing them to see how well they are doing in the present moment without fear of haunting traumatic experiences.

Meeting the needs of self-assured overall well-being and treatment for the anguish and suffering of all people impacted by the residential school experience can now be presented in a manner that is now more accepted outside the First Nations communities; traditional socio-cultural, and non-traditional clinical healing processes (Morissette, 1994) assist individuals, families, and communities by offering holistic healing, providing a congruent environment with healing circles and counseling sessions working together. For healing to be initiated it is essential that the lived experiences of First Nations people who are currently living in the aftermath of the residential school experience be explored and addressed. The current lack of therapeutic processes supports the enormous need for a harmonious healing practice for First Nations people.

Traditional Healing Practices

Healing is described as recovery of tradition itself (Kirmayer et al., 2003); fundamental acts of healing at the individual, family, and community levels (Kirmayer et al., 2003; Morissette, 1994) include restoration of language, spiritual practices, and communal activities. Before embarking on the journey of traditional healing today, one

must realize the intensity with which healing will arise from Sweat Lodge ceremonies, healing circles, Medicine Wheel, Vision-Quests, Powwow, and fasting. From the western perspective it may be difficult to understand; however, many First Nations people may prefer to seek holistic healing in traditional fashion, that healing which has been handed down through the ages.

Some First Nations Canadians are currently involved in their own healing practices by conveying traditional knowledge and values to their people (Assembly of First Nations, 1994; Claes & Clifton, 1998; Kirmayer et al., 2003), and by telling stories of their own lived experiences at residential school. The Assembly of First Nations (1994) acknowledges that allowing residential school survivors to tell their stories gives them permission to become emotionally unencumbered; it is in this acknowledgement that the freedom from oppression and healing begins. The traditional socio-cultural healing practices such as healing circles are becoming integrated with the non-traditional healing practices of one-on-one clinical interventions.

The circle (Ryback, Lakota, & Robbins, 2004), sacred in First Nations spirituality, has become assimilated into non-traditional healing practices. For example, Healing Circles, Medicine Wheel, Powwow, Talking Circles, Pipe Ceremonies, and Sweat Lodges (Ryback et al., 2004) demonstrate the power of First Nations peoples' spirituality and traditional healing practices, providing a non-judgmental environment where reflection can take place. Ovide Mercredi, National Chief of the Assembly of First Nations (1994), stressed that recovery and healing for residential school survivors and their families cannot exclude non-traditional healing practices and that "the interfacing of two cultures" (Morissette, 1994, p.391) will "help to create a better society" (Assembly of First

Nations, 1994, p.157). The circle is adjunctive in interfacing the First Nations and Dominant cultures with respect and sensitivity; healers could be “invited across some thresholds of awareness” (Ryback et al., 2004) giving way to a broader determinant of healing practices.

Non-Traditional Healing Practices

Psychological interventions can convey insightful understanding into a treatment paradigm for First Nations people and once the spiritual aspect of healing is introduced individuals usually shift their perspectives and begin to search for a deeper healing of the spirit and soul (Duran, 2006). The words *spirit* and *soul* have been introduced to the discourse at this juncture because of the nature of psychological healing. Duran (2006) states that the “literal definition of our profession has deep roots that are enmeshed with spiritual metaphor” (p. 19) and “the word *psychology* literally translates into ‘study of soul’ (p.19). Duran (2006) goes on to state that the word ‘psychotherapists’ “literally translates into ‘soul healer’ and the task our profession pursues via soul healing is eradication of ‘psychopathology’ which translates into ‘soul suffering’” (p.19).

Although cognitive therapies seem to be the “flavor of the decade at this point in time” (Duran, 2006, p. 19), transpersonal psychology is a method of non-traditional healing which is readily accepted by First Nations people who are on the healing journey to spiritual wholeness and enlightenment (Nixon, 1992). According to Namka (n.d) “the path to enlightenment is always under construction” (p1.); transpersonal psychology takes the road less traveled and is the basis for personal transcendence into dimensions never before encountered. Dr. John Smethers (2007) contends that “we have a vague understanding of the Self, but it is not all clear” (p. 2). Experiencing spiritual emergence,

undergoing powerful mystical experiences and surrendering to “remapping the soul to enlarge the territory” (Ken Wilber as cited in Namka, n.d., p.1) is a process described by Namka (n.d.) as “a disintegration of the lower levels of the self which are negated and transcended to move onto higher levels of consciousness” (p.1). Understandably, reaching out to begin the healing path to self-awareness is complicated but in order to achieve that higher level of consciousness one must be motivated to set down purposeful steps in order to make the journey effective; the ‘soul healers’, whose therapeutic approaches do just that, include Jung (1966, 1971), Satir (1991), and Almaas (2000). Each one offer their own unique therapeutic approaches to healing, however, the *Diamond Approach* model of healing proposed by Almaas (2000) best informs this particular research and its co-researchers. At this point it is important to note that the following discourse emphasizes Almaas’s (2000) *Diamond Approach* to holistic healing.

Jung’s Individuation through Analytic Therapy

Not to be taken lightly, non-traditional therapy used for discovery of ‘self’ works harmoniously with Jung’s (1966) Analytical Therapy dealing with one’s personality. Using these two forms of therapy are guides to taking the important steps into the world of spiritual enlightenment. Jung (1971) realized that human beings are naturally given to make their personal mark in this world and residential school survivors are no exception. The process of individuation (Jung, 1971) or self-realization, is not simply accomplished by acquiring fame and fortune through material attainment or infamy; rather, truly individualized human beings must become transcendent – that is, they must “come to grips with the unconscious part of their personalities” (James & Gilliland, n.d., p. 3).

Individuation is a complex and complicated process, so complex in fact that many people often do not achieve this second to last goal for living. For most people, just the experience of efficient cathartic release of an issue, gaining insight into it, and learning various new ways of dealing with it is sufficient; however, some people may go well beyond the surface of the immediate crisis, plunging “into a transformation of their psychic processes and their total being” (James & Gilliland, n.d., p.3). James & Gilliland (n.d.) explain that a very different and changed individual will emerge from this profound experience having achieved “a higher consciousness and a clearer picture of their distinctiveness and separateness from the rest of humanity” (p.3). Analytical therapy seeks to create a communicative link between the conscious and unconscious and seeks to subconsciously get in touch with the individual’s shadow self. The shadow self is the plain nobody really wants others to see – it is the dark underbelly of the persona, the weak and inferior remnant of the real self. Getting to know the shadow self is essential for fourth dimension recovery (James & Gilliland, n.d.). Appropriately, Jung’s (1966) Analytical Therapy is a workable premise for healing. Consisting of “four stages of treatment: confession and catharsis, elucidation, education, and transformation” (Jung, 1966, p.68) each stage works in conjunction with the other. Jung (1966) explains that no stage is totally effective by itself, although one stage alone may be adequate enough for a return to mental health. In this way, by linking Jung (1966,1971) with traditional healing practices, Kirmayer et al., (2003) and Morissette (1994) reason that suitable diverse healing practices would assist in alleviating demoralization, depression, substance abuse, and social problems. Morissette (1994) considers clinical interventions which are specifically targeted to promote healing for residential school survivors and their families

integrate both traditional and non-traditional methods. Within his model of combined healing practices Morissette (1994) supports families who live in chaos and crisis.

Satir's Transformational Systemic Therapy

Satir (1991) was an early champion of equality and value and is described as an eminent family systems theorist. She reportedly “believed that chaos and crisis represent constructive confrontations with the status quo to bring about a shift in perception” (Namka, n.d., p.3). The Satir Model (1991) is based on “the human ability to change and manifest that growth” (p. 16). Satir (1991) believed that everyone has choices, particularly in the ability to respond to situations rather than to react to them, and that “the problem is not the problem; coping is the problem” (p.17). This theorem may have application to the inability to cope with ‘life on life’s terms’, by First Nations families who continue to be demoralized and enslaved by the residue of cruelty and the imperious rules which were levied by the unrelenting hand of church and state.

Satir (1991) explains that when following rules that endanger self-worth that people often develop physiological symptoms of illness and this, along with psychological illnesses, is what happened to the victims of the residential school system. Residential school taught the survivors that there were rules, rules that transmitted life and death significance to those who chose to break them. Most of the rules implemented by the residential schools were harsh and detrimental to health and safety. Children were forced to eat rotten food and food containing maggots; they were not allowed to go to the bathroom after they had gotten into bed – very detrimental to their well being. Furthermore, if children broke a rule such as no talking in your own native language, the punishment was horrendous - they were emotionally and physically abused – very

detrimental to their safety. As residential school abuse progressed, human self-worth began to wane. While they were children they had to obey or be punished; today there are choices offered where “awareness, acceptance, and connectedness become important avenues for growing toward wholeness” (Satir, 1991, p. 143). Growth is to a large extent when the change from dysfunctional to functional ‘being’ adds onto that which is already identified within that ‘being’ as a unique individual.

In order to achieve essence in recovery and rehabilitation, it is essential that all First Nations people be recognized as unique individuals by themselves and by others. For those influenced by the dominant culture and the residential school experience, recovery of ‘essence’ on the long journey to wholeness is proposed in this study as the blending of traditional cultural and non-traditional healing practices. In order for this to be effective, a blanket of care must be spread open wide, a holistic approach to healing must be uniformly practiced for all who seek treatment for having lived through residential school experiences and ultimately for those who are living in the aftermath.

Realization of the Essential Identity - A Therapeutic Model for Intergenerational Change

Although Jung (1966, 1971), Satir (1991) and Wilber (1983) offer effective transpersonal approaches to healing, (Almaas, 2000) presents a transpersonal perspective that has farther-reaching implications in the healing process for First Nations residential school survivors and impacted family members. This new healing paradigm for self-realization that Almaas (2000) so clearly and phenomenologically explains is appropriate for First Nations peoples’ healing and recovery. The following discussion will show how Almaas’s (2000) Diamond Approach, through the use of depth psychology, can

effectively support First Nations people and help guide them on their journey to holistic health thus moving beyond the inner turmoil.

Almaas (2000) talks about the ‘narcissistic’ wound making it requisite at this juncture to explain that in the context of this discourse, Almaas (2000) clarifies that this source of *narcissism* is “the soul’s estrangement from its true nature” (Almaas, 2000, p. 27) rather than what is commonly referred to as the narcissistic personality disorder. One example of this ‘estrangement’ can be explained in this way, that individuals are normally aware that they have some sense of selfishness with a need to be seen and appreciated; although people are conditioned to believe that this is normal, these traits are in fact narcissistic occurrences and are common to all non-realized individuals (Almaas, 2000).

Almaas (2000) describes healing as working through the narcissistic wound and the great betrayal, achieving self-realization and being able to move ahead in a world besieged with the need to continue the healing process for the sake of self. Positive steps forward toward healing can be taken once a person’s identification of self and its relationship to narcissism is understood. There are five factors that affect the wounding process (Almaas, 2000) however “the vulnerability is reflected in the environmental and constitutional factors ...[and] depth psychology tends to include only the environmental and constitutional factors” (Almaas, 2000, p. 176) rather than all five factors.

Factors Determining Wounds

The above mentioned factors create wounds which make for narcissistic responses. Through a variety of physical and socio-environmental factors it is natural that a person may become predisposed to narcissistic responses. Constitutional and environmental factors are two such factors which are being looked at in this body of research with

regard to First Nations people and their families who are impacted by the residential school experience.

The state of the body and its effect on the development of the self plays a role in the development of narcissism (Almass, 2000). For example, chemical imbalances are correlated to some emotional complexities which First Nations people experience particularly those who are survivors of the residential school experiences. Feelings of “loss of a social self” (Wesley-Esquimaux & Smolewski, 2004, p.66), gives way to learned helplessness, affecting an individual’s motivation, cognition and emotion. Some living relatives of the residential school survivors suffer Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder, and according to Almaas (2000),

Chronic difficult emotional states may contribute to the development of narcissism because such painful affects... might make it difficult for the [person] to stay deeply in touch with himself.....Some depth psychologists believe that congenital predispositions to some affects, such as rage may predispose an individual towards narcissistic manifestations (p. 201).

Constitutional Factors

Almass (2000) reports that these factors have to do with the “state of the body and its effect of the development of the self” (Almaas, 2000, p.200) and clarifies this statement by explaining that an “infant might be born with a body or nervous system damaged or imbalanced in some way ...in the last decade research has revealed that some emotional difficulties are due to chemical imbalance” (Almaas, 2000, p. 200). There are depth psychologists who believe that “congenital predispositions to some affects, such as rage, may predispose an individual towards narcissistic manifestations” (Almaas, 2000, p. 201)

although Almaas (2000) claims, “We cannot discuss this factor in any detail because we do not have much experience of it” (p. 201). There are also environmental factors that determine wounds.

Environmental Factors

Environmental factors relate to the development of a person’s perceived identity with regard to their individual “characteristics, capacities and qualities” (Almaas, 2000, p. 189). The person is not seen for who they are from childhood and being seen is, according to Almaas (2000) “probably the deepest narcissistic need” (p.189). In the *Canadian Journal of Native Education*, Ing (1991) underscores how detrimentally affected adult self-esteem and parenting skills are due to middle childhood residential school experiences. Environmental factors played a huge part in early childhood connections because First Nations children did not interact with their own parents but with strangers whom they did not trust nor feel safe with (Wesley-Esquimaux & Smolewski, 2004). Depth psychology (Almass, 2000) provides an opening to work with the consequences of environmental aspects of wounding, which for the First Nations people have manifested into psychodynamic issues and structural difficulties. Barriers that these difficulties present are significant with regard to self-realization and are detailed and interwoven expressions in the growth of narcissism (Almaas, 2000).

Self- Realization: A Therapeutic Journey beyond Narcissism

Self-realization includes experiences of positive mirroring back from a ‘parent’ which children in residential schools did not receive. Mirroring is an essential part of a person’s normal sense of identity and it is important that parents convey mirroring and positive regard to their children (Almaas, 2000; Bradshaw, 2005); Almaas (2000) explains, “the

need for mirroring is a completely natural phenomenon, which helps the self to integrate the various manifestations of the self...”(p. 281). For First Nations people, the intergenerational legacy, void of self-identification, will continue until the aloneness and isolation is dealt with, until the people themselves recognize the ‘narcissistic wound’ (Almaas, 2000) for what it really is.

The greatest obstacle to self-realization, according to Almaas (2000), is narcissism, “the condition of not feeling centered in oneself, or authentic and free enough to be oneself [and it] involves many of the characteristics that are usually ascribed to narcissism” (p.5). These particular characteristics form a group of traits that constitute a ‘syndrome’ which is referred to as narcissistic disturbance, and is regarded as a “particular disturbance in the development of the self” (Almaas, 2000, p.5). Narcissism alienates a person from their “Essential Identity” (Almaas, 2000, p. 135) which is that alertness, or “felt knowingness” (Almaas, 2000, p, 136) that a human being possesses when he is in his true identity and self-realized.

The process of gaining self-realization, in this case, for First Nations people traumatized by the residential experience, is a transpersonal journey wherein transcending false self-representation can be worked through by using what Almaas refers to as the *Diamond Approach* (Almaas, 2000). The *Diamond Approach* (Almaas, 2000) integrates the fundamentals of depth psychology, especially the theories of ego psychology and object relations; it then expands them into the spheres of the human psyche which are within the realms of religion, spirituality and metaphysics (Almaas, 2000).

The Stages

The following stages of “working-through” (Almass, 2000, p. 303) involve an explicit factor of Being which are connected to factors of the real self (Almass, 2000). These stages are:

1. Fakeness
2. The shell
3. The narcissistic wound
4. The great betrayal
5. Narcissistic rage, hatred and envy
6. Narcissistic emptiness, meaninglessness and pointlessness
7. Loss of orientation, center and self-recognition
8. Narcissistic shame
9. Narcissistic rejection object relation
10. Selfless inner spaciousness
11. Ego activity
12. Narcissistic depression
13. Helplessness and non-doing
14. Trust and the need for holding
15. The ego ideal
16. The holding loving light
17. The Essential Identity
18. Point-diamond, or essential self-recognition and resolution of the need
for mirroring (Almass, 2000, p. 303).

These essential steps will be addressed specifically with regard to First Nations peoples' journey toward essence in recovery. By acknowledging and working through Almaas' (2000) stages, First Nations people can begin to experience spiritual openness thus giving less power to the feelings of worthlessness and hopelessness.

Fakeness and the Empty Shell

Each individual has a perception of self-identity which is based upon images of historical experiences. For many First Nations people who experienced residential school abuse and for the family members who currently live in the aftermath of their family members' residential school experiences, this feeling of emptiness makes them feel "impoverished, insubstantial, and false.....hollow and vacant, as if [each] body has become a shell of tension with this insides sucked out of it" (Almaas, 2000, p.304).

Parents were forced to allow the dominant culture to take their children into residential schools, unable to support their own children. This created a wound which caused great pain and which had to remain invisible; therefore, young First Nations children disconnected from themselves and went numb in order to deal with the feelings of pain. Dissociating in this manner permits emotional absenteeism in order to ignore traumatic details of a painful past (Bowins, 2004; Candel, I., Merckelback, H., & Kuijpers. M., 2003; Edge, 1998; Gerlach, n.d; Irwin, H.J., 1998). Self-consciousness is defended from being "contaminated by overwhelming pain, humiliation, and feelings of helplessness" (Apitzch, 1996, as cited in Candel, et al., 2003; Dion Stout & Kipling, 2003).

Psychological defense mechanisms are viewed as typical protective coping mechanisms used by adults and children who have lived through insufferable experiences such as

residential school and its living legacy (Bowins, 2004; Candel, et al., 2003; Gerlach, n.d; Irwin, H.J., 1998).

The more a person is aware of the empty shell and experiences it, the more they become aware of the fakeness of their very existence. Most First Nations people have never had the opportunity to truly live from their Essential core (Almaas, 2000) with a feeling of authenticity. The shell subsists at a variety of levels and simply put, it is “the soul structuring itself through the self-image” (Almaas, 2000, p. 306). With regard to residential school abuse, First Nations people have produced the shell from within their own minds, identifying with past images as to who they are, projecting that image to their families as a living model.

The Narcissistic Wound

For any person dealing with a deep narcissistic wound, specifically the feelings of worthlessness, unimportance, deception, and fakeness that is part of narcissistic shame (Almaas, 2000), it is a very painful realization to witness authenticity in others. The person is also gravely aware of the ‘great betrayal’ and feels the intense pain of being an inferior human being; these painful affects must be dealt with effectively in order for a person to have the opportunity to work through their narcissism. In learning to accept the narcissistic emptiness with no judgment or rejection, the person can experience “the freedom and openness of [their] Being” (Almaas, 2000, p. 337). Almaas (2000) goes on to explain, “In black space we are aware of the absence of self; however, we experience it not as a deficiency but rather as freedom and release” (p. 338).

By hiding the “most precious nature” (Almaas, 2000, p. 319) from even themselves, residential school survivors currently feel the pain as being more terrible and the wound

itself as a profound unending chasm of pain. Deep psychological wounds, particularly “narcissistic wounding, such as exploitation, harassment, abuse, rape and torture” (Simon, 2002, p. 31) can cause trauma and are perceived by those who experienced such wounds to “contain strong interpersonal element[s]” (Simon, 2002, p. 31). These elements are then compounded by intense sorrow, a great deal of regret, and in some cases, self-hatred, along with guilt and shame (Almaas, 2000).

The need to be seen, recognized and valued has intensified for First Nations people. Parental nurturing, as well as cultural and spiritual development no longer existed after First Nations children were placed in residential schools and the children were never seen for whom they were, but for whom the dominant culture wanted them to be. During the recovery process this need will become one of the essential strands leading to self-understanding (Almaas, 2000).

All human beings need important people in their lives to relate to them in specific ways from childhood, including parents, siblings, friends, family members, and teachers, who can instill in the person encouragement of the development of their potential (Almaas, 2000). This was not the fate of most First Nations children who were abandoned into residential schools creating the downward spiral toward a condition known as Residential School Syndrome. Residential School Syndrome is a “distinct cluster of problems and behaviours” (Corrado & Cohen, 2003, p. 23) due to the severity of individual trauma suffered by individuals from attending residential schools. This traumatic condition is related to PTSD according to clinicians and its primary characteristics involve powerful silence and an immense trepidation of emotion (Corrado & Cohen, 2003). Deficient parenting skills and excessive substance abuse have also been

noted as characteristic symptoms of this condition as well (Claes & Clifton, 1998; Brasfield, 2001).

The Ultimate Betrayal

Having been forced to service another reality (Lucas, 2004), specifically the dominant culture, a great many First Nations people internalized the feelings of abandonment which has left them feeling that they have abandoned themselves, their culture, their traditions, their language, and their spirituality altogether; for this they feel guilt and shame. Almaas (2000) speaks of “The Great Betrayal” (p.318) which starts when those closest to a person mirrored and supported a false existence. At a more essential level, however, that person actually realizes that they have betrayed themselves:

We come to understand that we have betrayed ourselves. We realize that when our environment betrayed us and abandoned us, with varying degrees of insensitivity, we felt alone and abandoned, with no one relating to us. To be real meant being isolated from the environment, living in another universe, a universe not seen by our parents... (p. 319).

The ultimate betrayal that is experienced comes from the very depth of the disconnection from the Essential essence and the individual is then able to discern that just as others in their early development betrayed them, so did they betray themselves (Almaas, 2000; Lucas, 2004).

With implied reference to the ‘others’, Almaas (2002) sums up the world of self-betrayal for the First Nations people by saying,

So we learned to pretend, to be like them, to join them in their world, the world of lies, the world of the shell, the conventional world. We became what they wanted us to be,

what they paid attention to in us, what they preferred in us, what made them relate to us. Through this process of accommodation, we abandoned and rejected what they could not see, the parts of us they did not relate to. Since our essence was the element they recognized or understood least, our essence was the central element we disowned (p.319).

Narcissistic Shame, Rage, and Emptiness

When experienced to the fullest extent, narcissistic shame is excruciatingly painful. It causes a sense of being “an inferior human being, exposed to social judgment in the midst of severe disintegration of the self” (Almaas, 2000, p. 335). “Shame is said to arise from the self’s negative evaluation of the self” (Irwin, 1998, p. 238; Wells & Jones, 2000). According to Almaas (2000), when a person begins to feel a narcissistic wound, a great deal of embarrassment and shame is experienced and may feel ashamed of themselves, compounded by feeling worthless, deficient and not good enough (Almaas, 2000).

Many First Nations people have held onto feelings such as shame and worthlessness from the alleged abusive conditions they endured at residential school. These children may have taken on “a sense of responsibility or guilt for the abuse” (Irwin, 1998, p.239), resulting in self-blame (Irwin, 1998; Zupancic & Kreidler, 1998). Eventually victims learn from others that the abuse is not normal, which causes the victim to view their behavior as shameful (Irwin, 1998; Harper & Arias, 2004), however the steps to get to that awareness involve working through the very painful circumstances.

Some First Nations people who suffered residential school abuses judge themselves as having the inability to be real and they are prone to feel all the emotions of self-betrayal. Almaas’s (2000) words “deficient and inadequate, worthless and unimportant, weak and

inferior, a failure, a loser, a nothing....fake and unreal, lacking substance or value...a liar and a deceiver, an imposter [feeling that] life has been a hoax, a waste”(p.34) can explain the feelings many First Nations carry towards themselves. Here, the traitor to self has sold out, and in its stead the false self remains.

Related to social failure, something a great many First Nations people struggle with today, narcissistic shame causes deep pain. It leaves a person with the sense of being ‘less than’ a normal human being, and constantly being subjected to social judgments amidst the desperate collapse of the self; here the meeting of criticism and judgment creates a narcissistic characteristic (Almaas, 2000). Dealing with the judgments remains a matter of perception and freeing oneself from a particular object relation. Almaas (2000) explains,

This is the object relation between the empty and unreal self and a rejecting, critical, and hateful object. The self feels empty, lost, and meaningless, and projects on others the image of being critical, harsh, and rejecting of her because she is fake and has failed to be an adequate self. She feels helpless and impoverished, lost and worthless, and believes that others hate and despise her for feeling this way (p. 335).

Narcissistic emptiness “as it is in itself” (Almaas, p. 335) is void of judgment and rejection, thus allowing the person to objectively understand that the emptiness is in fact the absence of being the ‘self’. A deep spaciousness now becomes a peaceful emptiness (Almaas, 2000). At this point, recognition of a “dynamic essence of self” is likely to emerge and with it a feeling of depression.

Narcissistic Depression

The typically unconscious “dynamic essence of the self” (Almaas, 2000, p. 340) is automatic, compulsive and constantly active and the “main components of this activity are rejection, hope, and desire” (Almaas, 2000, p. 340). The self sees this activity as necessary to survival otherwise it would simply surrender into hopelessness. Working through the painful history, seeking realization of the essential identity, First Nations people will notice that the ego activity will lessen and the ability to experience the “selfless openness of the black space” (Almaas, 2000, p. 345) will be tolerable. Some people get stuck in the narcissistic depression because it is a replacement for the emptiness and acts as a kind of filler; some people would rather be depressed than to be nothing at all (Almaas, 2000). In order to be released from narcissistic depression, deep authentic surrender must take place which takes an enormous amount of trust.

For the First Nations people, trust toward the dominant culture is non-existent. The early holding environment was inadequate for First Nations children, they could not relax and feel safe, loved and cared for; subsequently that inadequacy has been passed down from generation to generation. First Nations peoples’ loss of trust among their fellow human beings (Freedman, 2006; O’Hara & Treble, 2000; Rowell, 2005; Simon, 2002) in turn leads to self abuse and chronic substance abuse (Assembly of First Nations, 1994; Claes & Clifton, 1998; Dion Stout & Kipling, 2003; Hylton, Bird, Eddy, Sinclair & Stenerson, 2002; Rowell, 2005; Wesley-Esquimaux & Smolewski, 2004).

The Psychic War Within

During interpersonal trauma, particularly with regard to the many reported residential school abuses, individuals may have become extremely adept at psychologically splitting

and may continue to do so whenever unpleasant circumstances arise; this provides the psychic defense needed in order not to have to face unpleasant issues, or ones that will give rise to further pain and suffering (Nixon, Personal Communication, 2003).

Individuals who dissociate as a means of coping with traumatic experiences may be at risk to do so with inconsequential stressors as well (Bowins, 2004; Candel et al., 2003; Edge, 1998, 2001); psychological splitting thus becomes the coping mechanism for all stressors. Abuse of substances such as alcohol, cocaine, marijuana, and methamphetamines become aides in dissociative behavior patterns and help to cognitively distort the negative experiences into positive ones if only for a short while. Substance abuse, a residential school legacy, (Claes & Clifton, 1998) appears to be the “basic human motive” (Bowins, 2004, p. 17) for many First Nations people to achieve an altered state of consciousness.

Freedom from Mind, Richness in Being - The Healing Path

In a search for transcendence and wholeness, it is asserted that there is a holistic paradigm that claims that “there is one interconnected reality of which we are all a part and of which we can all be aware...[and]...it invites exploration of the role of dissociative process...” (Edge, L. 2004, p. 156). The most favorable model for seeking that interconnected reality is one that can surpass the limitations currently placed on First Nations people who survive in a milieu of nearly non-existent recovery processes. The model for self-realization that Almaas (2000) explains is such a model and would seem appropriate for First Nations peoples’ healing and recovery.

Letting Go of Narcissistic Aspects of Self

Almaas (2000) articulately describes the experience of feeling free from the structure that was patterned by personal identification with any self-representation:

In black space we are aware of the absence of the sense of self [and] we experience it not as a deficiency but rather as freedom and release. There is a sense of newness and coolness, of lightness and light-heartedness, of the absence of burden and suffering, and the presence of purity and peace (p. 338).

Exploring the early holding environment will be important for First Nations people and in order to do this they must work through the history of what the effects of the inadequacies on individual self-identity structures (Almaas, 2000). Experiencing the pain of the past and sitting in that pain will help to reveal the absence of a quality holding environment.

Over a period of time, a First Nations individual may recognize a certain emptiness which is associated with the absence of basic holding (Almaas, 2000) then finally, acceptance of that absence will guide the individual into this “manifestation of Being, which turns out to be a quality of love” (Almaas, 2000, p. 342). Almaas (2000) explains this love as a “quality of boundless and gentle love...it is not exactly a personal kind of love; it is love for everything and everyone – universal love” (p. 344). He goes on to say that this love has a direct consequence on the self for the person to feel “lovingly held, as if cuddled in the infinitely loving arms of the universe” (Almaas, 2000, p. 344) and for First Nations people working on their painful issues, the more the loving expression of Being is experienced, the more their basic trust develops, leading toward a restored faith in reality (Almaas, 2000) and ultimately they are able to go beyond victimhood.

Consciousness of the Essential Being

During the healing process First Nations people will come to realize how heavy their assigned burdens have become. The intense work to establish the “freedom from mind” (Almaas, 2000, p. 349) permits the individual to realize that the presence is entirely in the now (Almaas, 2000; Tolle, 1998) with no indication of the past, as if time had never gone by. As Almaas (2000) explains, “one lives now in a wonderful universe of realization, insight, wonder, and profundity” (p.351). An experience of ‘I am’ or ‘I-am-ness’, the primary experience of the “Essential Identity” (Almaas, 2000, p. 351) offers the ‘self’ the ability to feel what Being is about in a non-dual fashion.

Once an individual has become conscious of this dimension of Being, the need for mirroring will no longer exist; this dimension also explains why each person needs to be recognized with admiration understanding, and affection, for they need to recognize this richness of Being (Almaas, 2000). Almaas (2000) states that “it is our potential and our human inheritance, and it is our unconsciously-felt right, which we usually experience as entitlement” (p.355). By implementing Almaas’s (2000) *Diamond Approach* together with traditional socio-cultural healing practices, First Nations people who attended residential school and their families who currently live in the aftermath of family members’ residential school experiences can begin to heal.

Chapter Conclusion

The literature recognizes that there is a need for a new healing paradigm for First Nations people who have been impacted by the lived experiences of residential school. Through uniting traditional and non-traditional healing practices and through integrating transpersonal psychology, the impetus is offered to First Nations people who are seeking

spiritual renewal and wholeness, thus making it possible to heal historic trauma. Next, Chapter Three will illuminate the research methodology and philosophies underpinning the research concerning *Recovery in the residential school abuse aftermath: A new healing paradigm*.

CHAPTER III: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This study is an interpretation of the lived experience of residential school abuse and the healing journey afterwards. The intergenerational impact of residential schooling is an explorative topic which points toward a form of human science research where individual understanding of the residential school experience is necessary. At the core of the phenomenon are the lived experiences of human beings, therefore a method of inquiry true to the experiences of these human beings was required and as Chessick (1998) stated, “Ontological hermeneutics, employing phenomenological methods, seeks truths that are foundational for all inquiry including science” (p. 259); thus the requirements of this study were fulfilled. In order to understand the current existence that many First Nations people endure, it is necessary to understand the past, as “the present is only understandable through the past, with which it has a living continuity” (Chessick, 1998, p. 263).

Philosophical Stance

It is presumed by the researcher that many First Nations people survive with trauma and substance addictions due to their lived experiences at residential school. It is also presumed that the families of these survivors are intergenerationally affected by the residential school experience. This researcher is of the opinion that holistic healing can take place for other individuals as well therefore this research study will provide the groundwork for that recovery process.

The emphasis for this study was on hermeneutics with adjunctive measures of phenomenology with a narrative approach. Phenomenological hermeneutics (Heidegger,

1962) places emphasis on ‘being in the world’ or the lived experience; hermeneutics itself involves “restoring of life to its original difficulty” (Caputo, 1987, p.1). This research was guided by hermeneutics in order to conduct one-on-one semi-structured interviews, opening avenues to understand the lived experiences of those individuals, whose parents, grandparents, and other family members attended residential school. This study was underpinned by a personal ontological orientation that the first person perspective was a necessary condition for any form of self-awareness and by an individual assumption that *subjective* awareness is an intuitive process. Several philosophers informed this study including Heidegger (1962) and Gadamer (1975). Agreement with Heidegger’s belief that being was to be understood in terms of time and he regarded phenomenology as the access to ‘being’, further led to the appreciation that it is in ‘being’ that self-awareness is achieved; that “feeling my own humanness as rooted in the same soil as [co-researchers]” (Jardine, 1990, p. 118) and being an “active ingredient in the research process” (Arminio, 2001, p. 242) the phenomenon as it is lived was better understood.

Within a naturalistic paradigm, a hermeneutic phenomenological approach was undertaken in order to purposefully gain understanding of the lived experiences (Gadamer, 1975; Heidegger, 1962; van Manen, 1990) of First Nations individuals who attended residential school, and subsequently those family members who currently live in the aftermath of the residential school experience. By unreservedly believing that each personal, human experience is exceptional and has special value to an individual, a philosophical and subjective research approach can preserve “the exceptionality of the

experience from the point of view of those who suffered” (Polit & Beck, 2004, p. 215). Interpretive research was an excellent fit for this study.

Interpretive research such as this hermeneutic phenomenological study necessitated that each co-researcher validated the interpretations of the researcher. van Manen (1990) explains that:

steps for conducting a hermeneutic phenomenological study are turning to a phenomenon to which, (a) the researcher is seriously committed, (b) investigating experience as it is lived rather than how it is conceptualized, (c) reflecting on the essential themes that characterize the phenomenon, (d) describing the phenomenon through the art of writing and rewriting, (e) maintaining a strong and oriented pedagogical relation to the phenomenon, and (f) balancing the research context by considering the parts within the whole (Arminio, 2001, p. 242).

Theoretical Framework: A Transpersonal Perspective

This research goes beyond traditional phenomenology to the transpersonal perspective of psychology by opening up mystical states of consciousness, allowing spiritual and holistic healing to transcend narcissism. Transpersonal psychology seeks balanced development or integration of mental, physical, spiritual, social, emotional, and creative expression into all aspects of a person’s life and has been defined as a spiritual emergence.

The genesis of transpersonal psychology, also known as the fourth force within psychology, took place in the United States circa 1966 and has been explained as the “interface of psychology and spirituality, exploring optimal mental health, self-realization, and development toward full human maturity” (Davis, n.d., p. 1). Davis (n.d.)

explains that the central concept in transpersonal psychology is self-transcendence or a “sense of self-identity which is deeper or higher, broader, and more unified with the whole” (p.1). The spiritual disciplines within transpersonal psychology can “incorporate insights about human development, suffering, and healing” (Davis, n.d., p.1) leading to spiritual wholeness.

Transpersonal psychology is explained by Wilber (1983) through the “three eyes of knowing” (p. 3). These

three eyes of knowing [are] “eye of flesh, by which we perceive the external world of space, time, and objects; the eye of reason, by which we attain a knowledge of philosophy, logic and the mind itself; and the eye of contemplation, by which we rise to a knowledge of transcendent realities (Wilber, 1983, p. 3).

Wilber (1983) explains:

The three eyes of a human being correspond, in fact to the three major realms of being described by the perennial philosophy, which are the gross (flesh and material), the subtle (mental and animic), and the causal (transcendent and contemplative) (p.3).

The eye of flesh provides understanding of the outside world of individual objects; the eye of mind, or the mental, regards the world of ideas, logic, or concepts; the eye of contemplation, or the spirit, possesses a transcendental mentality which is where the transpersonal approach lives (Wilber, 1983).

With this approach of transcendental spiritual healing in mind, Almaas (2000) designed a model of self-realization referred to as the *Diamond Approach*, consisting of 18 steps. Each step “involves an arising awareness of a definite phenomenological

element in the self-structure or an aspect of Being associated with elements of the true self” (Almaas, 2000, p. 303). It is upon this foundation that this body of research is built.

Research Method

Phenomenology

Phenomenology, an inductive, descriptive research method attempts to understand and describe little known phenomena as they are consciously experienced. It recognizes the difficulty of expressing human experiences through language yet it does not relate lived experiences unequivocally (Chessick, 1990); it is also imperative that meaningful interpretations of the descriptions are expressed verbally by the co-researchers (Chessick, 1990). Phenomenology uses the first person experience as a source of information and knowledge and fuses the researcher’s beliefs with those of the participants’. This means that the researcher acknowledges his or her own background in the study and uses it in the collection and interpretation of data. From the perspective of a qualitative researcher this work was approached with individual values and beliefs which have been based on personal experiences of trauma, addictions and a transpersonal journey of recovery. Personal feelings with regard to First Nations peoples’ stories about residential school abuse along with the researcher’s personal views of residential schooling has also fueled this research.

The question underlying phenomenology is, “what is the *essence* of this phenomenon as experienced by these people and what does it *mean*?” (Polit & Beck, 2004, p. 253; Osborne, 1990). Merleau-Ponty (1962) considered phenomenology to be “the study of essences” (p. viii) and also said that it is also a “philosophy that puts the essences back into existence” (p. viii).

In this study, an *a priori* decision was made (Creswell, 1997) to capture the lived experiences of First Nations people wherein experiences will be addressed retrospectively rather than introspectively (van Manen, 1990).

Hermeneutics

This study focused on hermeneutic phenomenology, the interpretation and understanding of human experiences with a narrative approach. Hermeneutic phenomenology originated from Heidegger's (1962) *Sein und Zeit*, his famous work translated as *Being and Time*, originally written in 1926. Caputo (1987) stated that hermeneutics is the practice of *aletheia*, the Greek word for "the event of concealment and unconcealment" (p.115). Heidegger (1962) referred to *aletheia* as an *unhiddenness* with relation to something that is hidden. Caputo (1987) believed *aletheia* to be an epochal, continuing process wherein things surface from the hidden to the obvious. The philosophical tendency of hermeneutics emphasizes the technique of interpretation through reflective inquiry and acknowledges that things come from somewhere and are not fabrications of the mind. Firstly, in hermeneutic interpretation the whole text is analyzed; then, just parts of the text are analyzed, leading to comparison of the two interpretations for clarification, lack of conflict, and a general understanding of the whole relative to its parts. This is what Smith (2002; Chessick, 1990; Heidegger, 1962) calls "the hermeneutic circle in which the participant, the researcher and even the reader of the report are implicated in endowing meaning and understanding" (p.215).

Rather than studying a phenomenon in detached fashion, according to Heidegger (1962) therefore, human being always involves a context or cultural totality within which experience occurs that is labeled by him alternatively "ground," "horizon," or

clearing,”..the horizon involves the customs, institutions, and language of a given culture...not the idiosyncratic perspectives of isolated individuals (Chessick, 1990, p. 261).

Hans-Georg Gadamer, born in 1900, is the leading interpreter of hermeneutics today. Gadamer explains that the knowledge we have of ourselves is deeply rooted within culture, history and our physical being; none of it is freely chosen. Chessick (1990) states that:

In *Truth and Method* [Gadamer] points out that there is a dialectic or mutual influence between the subject of interpretation and the interpreter, in which, as the horizons of each co-participate, meaning is generated in that particular dyadic pair at that particular time and place. What is known is always known by a knower situated within history and society, and therefore interpretation is always conditioned and influenced by the tradition and the horizon of understanding within which one operates (p. 262).

Narratively Speaking

Conversation, which was the essential piece of this hermeneutic inquiry, was a precursor to storytelling and leads this human sciences research toward a narrative approach. In this study, a narrative approach was used specifically within the framework of hermeneutic phenomenological research and focused the co-researchers' storytelling directly on the phenomenon under study. Stories told by the co-researchers originated from their personally lived experiences of residential school and their experiences of living with the after effects of the residential school experience. The narrative approach directly connected those lived experiences with this study; it embraced an equal, almost

friend-like relationship which enabled the co-researchers to be forthcoming with their stories of lived experiences (Nixon, Personal Communication, 2002). It was vital to recognize the distinct nature of each co-researcher's story, to acknowledge and honor the personal uniqueness of each co-researcher's circumstances, even though comparable themes may have emerged throughout the gathering of data (Nixon, 1992).

Supporting this study was the presumption that there was an impact on vast numbers of First Nations residential school survivors and their intergenerationally impacted family members and that healing practices, traditional or non-traditional, are not being utilized as a method of healing. Another presumption was that because many of the experiences related to attendance at residential schools were negative, that First Nations people continue to experience trauma, along with emotions of guilt, grief, shame, and anger. Having counselled First Nations individuals in a clinical environment and having intently listened to some of their stories, the position is taken that these emotions are a direct result of living in the aftermath of the residential school experience. A final conjecture underpinning this research was that these individuals are best qualified to illuminate the lived experiences of living in the aftermath of residential schools.

Research Design

Recruitment of Co-researchers

Aspiring to gain rich "accounts of co-researchers' pre-reflective experiences rather than cognitive constructions or experience based upon co-researchers' assumptions of what was intended" (Osborne, 1990, p. 82), it was vital that genuine experiences emerged, therefore an empathic understanding between co-researchers, including the researcher, was necessary. The only way to have that relationship was to remove the

“demand characteristics” (Osborne, 1990, p. 82) and replace them with genuine empathic understanding; this was accomplished.

Five First Nations individuals who have experienced and illuminated the phenomenon willingly and independently participated in audio taped, open-ended, confidential interviews between December 2006 and September 2007. There was need for only one interview per person as rich data was gathered at the initial interview through the use of one grand tour question and several follow-up questions. Prior to undertaking this research, ethical approval for the use of human subject research was applied for to the University of Lethbridge Ethics Board and was granted. All co-researchers were informed of this in the Combined Letter of Information and Consent Form (Appendix B).

Co-researchers consisted of one male and four females who willingly agreed to participate in this sensitive study; they were recruited through referrals which were generated through trusted, established personal contacts within the First Nations community of Lethbridge, Alberta. Each individual met the criteria of this research and were all invited to contribute to the study by sharing their lived experiences with me in a confidential, one-on-one, audio taped interview. All contributors were fully acquainted with every ethical procedure prior to their participation.

Access to the sample population was secured through referrals, which were created by means of already established personal contacts within the First Nations community. Many people knew from word of mouth within the First Nations community in Lethbridge that this study was taking place and the researcher was approached by individuals to take part in the study. On occasion interested individuals passed

information to the researcher with regard to their friends or relatives being interested in being interviewed for this research undertaking.

Due to prior communication with Elders and community leaders this study met with favor and these individuals were willing to assist in providing co-researcher referrals to me. It had been planned that in the event these referrals did not generate the required number of co-researchers for the study, discerning posters would have been distributed within the First Nations community at cultural gatherings, and snowball, or network, sampling techniques would have been applied (Polit & Beck, 2004). This did not prove necessary for this study as co-researchers came forward on their own volition.

Recruitment was conducted by interviewing all the referred individuals who met the researcher's criteria of participation. Specifically, the chosen co-researchers had to have experienced living in the aftermath of the residential school experience first hand and finally, five co-researchers were able to articulate what it is like to live in the aftermath of the residential school experience. Purposive criterion sampling best suited this study because the sample being studied was most representative of the phenomenon and they met a "predetermined criterion of importance" (Polit & Beck, 2004).

Interview Setting

This study took place in various localities within the Province of Alberta; the co-researchers were given the option of where they wanted the interviews to take place and traveling to locations within the province to accommodate them was undertaken. By offering the co-researchers the venue of choice, they would feel safe, not vulnerable, and therefore would be able to freely share their experiences. Each personally chosen setting provided the ambiance wherein the co-researchers were able to share their lived

experiences of residential school maltreatment. For example, one co-researcher felt at ease in her office where she worked as it was private and she had personal possessions in her office which provided her with a sense of comfort. The co-researcher's request to conduct the interview in her office was respected; a date and time were established and the interview took place.

Creating Trust with Co-researchers

Trust issues with regard to outsiders entering First Nations communities are issues that were addressed prior to any research interviews being conducted. Historically over time, trust has been broken and even with the promise of anonymity, it is hard for many First Nations people who attended residential school to accept such a promise and feel free to openly speak of personal horrors (Bottle, Personal Communications, 2006). With a paucity of literature on guidelines for entrée into a First Nations community, it became necessary to rely on the personally shared experiences of researchers such as Dr. Steven Thibodeau (Personal Communication, 2006). In addition to this personal communication, there was only one article available which explained the "stages of entry defined" (Kowalsky, Thurston, Verhoef, & Rutherford, 1996, p. 270). Kowalsky et al. (1996), Johnson (1984) and Hutchinson (1985) referred to these stages as stopping, waiting, transition, and entry. Depending how the community viewed the researcher, entrée may be stopped and the project may be terminated or it would otherwise continue (Kowalsky et al., 1996). The second stage, waiting, can be similar to the first stage, in that the members of the community under study evaluate the trustworthiness of the researchers and decide whether or not the study is worth taking time for or not (Kowalsky et al., 1996). By the time the third stage, transition, occurs, the researcher has been allowed in

and has become authentically involved in some of the community activities. Only when absolute trust is recognized does entry take place; then thoughts and expressions are openly shared by community members with the researcher (Kowalsky et al., 1996).

Moving through these stages is not unidirectional and a researcher can find themselves in a backwards direction as well as a forewords one, ceasing research altogether.

Kowalsky et al. states, “entry does not solely depend on the researcher gaining entry into community but also on the community developing a relationship with the researcher” (271). It is crucial that researchers have explicit, realistic guidelines when going into First Nations communities to conduct interviews and research. Communicating cultural sensitivity demonstrates that the researcher knows and understands community customs, thus transmitting respect to the co-researchers, Elders, gate keepers, and other community members.

Entrée to the co-researchers for this study was uncomplicated because of a commonsense understanding of the culture and because of the experience gained by having worked with the population under study in a clinical setting over the previous two years. This experience has provided knowledge and good understanding of political and some personal issues of the population from where the co-researchers came. Two First Nations community gate keepers and several First Nations Elders provided community access. Honorariums in the form of tobacco were provided to the Elders for their assistance as well as to those who participated in the research and at the completion of the study, a cultural gathering and feast was planned in order to honor the First Nations people for their participation in this study.

Inclusion/Exclusion Criteria

Eligibility criteria for inclusion in the study were (1) First Nations males and females eighteen (18) years of age or older who live in the aftermath of the residential school experiences or who have experienced residential school directly; (2) individuals must speak English. Exclusion criteria included (1) individuals with mental impairments or who suffer from unstable medical conditions; (2) chronic alcoholic or drug addicted individuals who were unable to remain sober for a consistent period of time.

Data Collection

Data is described as being “descriptions of experience” (Osborne, 1990, p. 82). In this study I collected “descriptions of experience” (Osborne, 1990, p. 82) through conducting in-depth, semi-structured, one and a half to two hour audio-taped interviews from each of my five co-researchers. Although not the primary source of data, it was anticipated that data collection also included pictures, transcripts, field notes, personal notes and logs pinpointing historical documentation (Kulig, Personal Communication, 2005) of the phenomenon under study. The five co-researchers described their lived experiences of living in the aftermath of residential school experiences and how that experience has impacted their lives and the lives of their families over their lifetimes and into the present moment.

During the first phase of the interview process, a trusting rapport was established with the co-researchers and they were informed of what the research was about. During the second phase of the interview process, data was gathered through the above mentioned semi-structured interviews, and was extremely vigilant not to ‘lead’ the co-researchers in their answers (Osborne, 1990). It was advisable to permit the data to speak for itself

consequently the richest data was that which the co-researcher volunteered; prompting was left to encourage a co-researcher who appeared to “have run out of steam” (Osborne, 1990, p. 84) however prompting was not necessary in this study. All co-researchers were asked to reflect more upon the phenomenon once they have left the interview so they could contact the researcher to report any further information. A second interview was proposed for the co-researchers to review and discuss the interpretations and themes which had been gleaned from the transcribed audio tapes, however the researcher made the decision to make casual contact with each co-researcher to review the interpreted data. This was acknowledged by the researcher as a method of confirming the interpretations without re-traumatizing the co-researchers by questioning them about the sensitive phenomenon under study. This was considered important because as part of the process of hermeneutic research, ongoing conversations with the co-researchers with regard to the phenomenon was considered crucial so that more information may emerge “enabling a more complete illumination of the phenomenon” (Osborne, 1990, p. 84).

During the stage of gathering data, permission from the co-researchers granted permission to engage in congenial conversation prior to and immediately after the interviews; time allowance for polite conversation was always factored into the interview time frame and First Nations cultural etiquette was always considered; this was considered to be an ethical consideration of cultural sensitivity. Each co-researcher was given a pseudonym in order to protect their anonymity and confidentiality in a way that they could not be identified within their communities.

Data Analysis

In order to properly conduct hermeneutic phenomenological studies one must frame the question in such a way that it asks what the researcher seeks to answer, for example, “What is the phenomenon that the researcher seeks to illuminate?” (Osborne, 1990, p. 81). A particular theoretical perspective can then be used in order to interpret the data. Osborne states, “however, if there is a structure to the phenomenon it will transcend particular interpretations” (p. 81).

The audio tapes were transcribed verbatim in an environment of confidentiality and safety then they were reviewed and cleaned in the same environment. The approach taken in analyzing the data included looking for deep structures which typify the phenomenon, reading between the lines, and interpreting the data. All of the data was analyzed using a combined approach of descriptive and interpretive analysis (van Manen, 1990) through frequent reading of the transcripts; deeper meaning and understanding emerged from the frequency of reading transcripts creating complete familiarity with the data (Osborne, 1990; van Manen, 1990). Osborne (1990) declares “the researcher’s focus is upon the deep structure of meaning rather than surface linguistic structure...it is the shared structure which is most important...” (p. 86).

The transcripts were read over many times and as themes began to emerge, a color coding technique was used to isolate each theme. The same procedure was used for isolating the sub-theme. As the determining themes materialized they were recorded on a separate piece of paper and reviewed carefully once the process of color coding had been completed. Numbering the lines of each transcript simplified this process because beside each theme the line number was recorded thus making it possible for the researcher to

reference themes. This was a challenging procedure at the onset of the thematic analysis however once it became established the themes and sub-themes were easy to follow.

Quotes were also recorded within the analysis process therefore the line numbers became a very important part of the analysis.

Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness of the data was ascertained using the criteria of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Creswell, 1997; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Polit & Beck, 2004). Credibility was determined by engaging co-researchers in conversation and reviewing the interpretations in the transcribed data to see how accurate the interpretations were. This ensured that faith can be placed in the findings (Polit & Beck, 2004) and transferability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) was established because the findings from the study may be applied to other individuals in similar situations.

Dependability included providing sufficient descriptive data and this was done in order for consumers to be able to “evaluate the applicability of the data to other contexts” (Polit & Beck, 2004, p. 435); therefore, dependability determined that enough information and data had been gathered in order for future researchers to carry out a similar study with the expectations of securing similar results. Confirmability of this study was determined by the manner in which the information gathered actually supported the facts obtained by the data analysis. Co-researchers were asked to review the transcripts to ensure congruence between themselves and the researcher with regard to the interpretation, meaning, and accuracy of the data analysis. Rigor was further increased by member checking, by communicating through casual conversation with the co-researchers to ensure that the data was accurate.

Validity

Osborne (1990) explains four major ways in how validity of a researcher's interpretations can be assessed, "First, by [the researcher] bracketing his/her orientation to the phenomenon and carefully describing the procedure and data analysis" (p. 87) the reader will be given the chance to fully understand the interpretations of the data. Giorgi (1975) states that even if the researcher's interpretations do not agree with those of the co-researcher, at least the co-researcher has an understanding of how the interpretations were reached.

Osborne (1990) says that "second[ly], during collection and interpretation of the data the researcher can check interpretations for goodness of fit with the co-researchers" (p. 87). Here congruence was checked through conversation between researcher and co-researchers which permitted the co-researchers to account correctly for their lived experiences (Osborne, 1990). Validation of interpretations was done through the "juridical process of presenting coherent and convincing arguments....[and citing Gergen (1985)], Osborne (1990) explains that the interpretive process is dependent upon rhetoric which convinces members of the research community" (p. 88). Shapiro (1986, cited in Osborne (1990) clarifies:

Fourth, the final check on the validity of the interpreted structure of the phenomenon depends upon the extent to which that structure resonates with the experiences of other people, not in the study, who have experienced the phenomenon. For example, the structure of the phenomenon of childbirth should resonate with the experience of others, not in the study, who have experienced childbirth (p. 88).

It is important to remember that there is no absolute interpretation of the data and that sometimes it can produce contradictory meanings, however the best a researcher can do is to lay out a particular interpretation in the most persuasive way possible, have that interpretation sustained by the indications of the data and allow the reader to make the concluding verdict.

Ethical Issues

The following were the main ethical considerations within this study. Ethical standards were met by following Tri Council guidelines paying particular attention to Section 6, human research involving Aboriginal People. Obedience to stringent ethical standards for vulnerable co-researchers was vigilantly undertaken.

Ethical clearance was obtained from the University of Lethbridge prior to the start of the research study. The Principle of Beneficence (Polit & Beck, 2004), to do no harm, was adhered to at all times. Potential benefits of the study were weighed against potential risks to individuals, and research was conducted because distress to co-researchers was not apparent. Co-researchers were informed of their right to refuse to participate in the study and of non-detrimental treatment if they chose not to participate. Co-researchers had the right to full disclosure, were treated fairly as autonomous agents (Polit & Beck, 2004), and were granted the “right to ask questions, refuse to give information, to ask for clarification, or to terminate their participation” (Polit & Beck, 2004, p.147).

In accordance with the Principle of Justice (Polit & Beck, 2004), all co-researchers were informed of their right to fair treatment and their right to privacy. Anonymity and confidentiality was honored by using code numbers in place of names on tapes, documents, notes, transcripts, and demographic information forms. Only the researcher

and committee members knew the identity of co-researchers and only the researcher and committee members had the co-researcher's contact information. The contact information was kept separate from all other confidential information gathered during the study. Throughout the study all confidential information was kept under lock and key, available only to the researcher and the committee supervisor. Once the study was completed the documentation remained under lock and key in a secure location and will remain there for seven years after which time it will be destroyed.

Informed Consent

Within the Tri Council Guidelines, concerning cultural safety for the co-researchers, informed consent was handled in a manner unique to the population under study. Instead of written consent, oral consent was accepted and each co-researcher was informed of this format prior to the study. The Combined Letter of Information and Consent (Appendix A) was read to each co-researcher by the researcher prior to the interview and would have been audio taped while being read if necessary. When co-researchers gave consent, they were asked to state their name for the record and spell it for confirmation.

This specific audio-taped information was transcribed and remained separate from the verbatim transcripts once each interview had been transcribed. Anonymity and confidentiality was maintained by using code numbers on all documentation and pseudonyms within the body of the text. Once they were transcribed the tapes were respectfully placed in a pouch that the researcher had made and were kept in a place of safety, drum music was played and the tapes were smudged on a regular basis. The researcher considered the spirits of the co-researchers to be on those tapes therefore

respect for them dictated this procedure. The co-researchers were told of this procedure and each one reported their gratitude for the respect demonstrated by the researcher.

In providing information, the researcher used simple language to communicate all consent information. Consent forms, information letters, and any other written documentation were consistent with co-researchers' reading levels; for the general population under study, a Flesch Kincaid eighth grade reading level was used.

It was expected that touching on the reality of painful historical issues would trigger the emotions of guilt, grief, shame, and anger. Debriefing for co-researchers was provided. Due to the extreme sensitive nature of the interviews, there were two highly trained counsellors ready for referral in order to debrief with co-researchers should the need have arisen. The researcher/co-researcher bond was not exploited by the researcher acting as a counsellor, therefore ethical indiscretions were avoided, as some of the co-researchers recounted the researcher as a former counsellor.

Chapter Conclusion

This chapter discussed the research methodology which was implemented while this research was being conducted. In order to offer the reader a clearer understanding of the method used, a description of phenomenology, hermeneutics and transpersonal psychology was detailed. Explanations of transpersonal psychology by John Davis (n.d.), Ken Wilber (1983) and Almaas (2000) were highlighted in order to provide the reader with a clear understanding of spiritual wholeness. Chapter Three also addressed the research method including selection of co-researchers, data analysis and description of the interview process. Ethical considerations which were undertaken in this study were also included.

The following chapter will explore the themes which emerged from the narratives of the five co-researchers as they reveal their lived experiences of residential school.

**CHAPTER IV: THEMES FROM FIVE ACCOUNTS OF RESIDENTIAL
SCHOOL EXPERIENCES**

This chapter will address the themes which emerged from the collective stories of five co-researchers’ interviews. Before concentrating on the themes, however, the context of the conversations can be better appreciated once some background on the co-researchers has been provided. A diminutive profile of each person will help to provide a visual rendering of whom they are today after having suffered such appalling experiences at residential school.

One male and four females between the ages of 47 and 71 (see Table 1) emotionally and expressively shared explicit, intimate details of their experiences at residential school. Eddie, Carmen, Gelayne, and Elizabeth attended residential school; Starr did not, however, details of what she revealed parallels the mutual experiences of Eddie, Carmen, Gelayne, and Elizabeth. Starr was brought up by an elder relative who attended residential school for many years – exemplifying the linkage of the ‘paralleled mutual experiences’. This parallel prepared the awareness that if there had been an attempt to parent an individual by a former residential school survivor, some of the legacy would continue with the family member.

Table 1

The Co-researchers’ Demographic Information

NAME	GENDER	AGE	BLOOD OR PEIGAN	YEARS ATTENDED
EDDIE	MALE	50-60	BLOOD	15 - 18
CARMEN	FEMALE	50-60	BLOOD	5 - 10
GELAYNE	FEMALE	45-55	BLOOD	5 - 10
STARR	FEMALE	45-55	PEIGAN	Did not attend
ELIZABETH	FEMALE	65-75	PEIGAN	5 - 10

The Five Co-researchers

Eddie, aged 59, was a friendly, social, attentive gentleman with a passion for helping his people. He is an experienced Social Worker and he uses his residential school experiences to teach other First Nations people how to live beyond their abusive histories. Living beyond his own history is still challenging for Eddie but he was adamant that he progresses through each day by consciously using traditional and non-traditional healing practices. He says that that helps him to come to terms with whom he really is. Eddie attended residential school for 12 years in Central Alberta. Prior to entering residential school, Eddie described himself as a free happy-go-lucky kind of child and he was brought up by adoring parents in Washington State, USA. He entered residential school where he was affected spiritually, emotionally, and physically from the age of six until 18.

Because the International border was not a barrier to First Nations people, many other families like Eddie's traveled to Canada from the USA in the fall for the haying season. It was expected that the families would all return together to their homes in Montana or Washington State to pick apples once the haying season in Canada was over. That did not happen the year Eddie was abducted by a priest, a nun and an Indian Agent and sent to residential school in Alberta. During the fall haying season while Carmen's family was in Canada, the same events took place.

At 53 years of age, Carmen, a courageous, energetic, spiritual First Nations woman revealed that she is also passionate about helping her First Nations 'brothers and sisters' move past their residential school experiences. Carmen is an empathic counsellor to her people and claims tribal spirituality as her own. She is married to a man who still

practices Catholicism religiously, and together they have grown sons and young grandsons. Carmen is just now learning her First Nations language from her husband and despite his devotion with the Catholic Church he supports her in her more traditional roles. Carmen is a bundle carrier, a medicine woman and has her own sweat lodge with which her husband assists her; Carmen advocates uniting traditional and non-traditional healing practices in a program of recovery to help her people heal from residential school trauma.

Carmen entered residential school in Alberta at the age of four. She and four of her older siblings were taken from her family; her younger siblings remained with her parents. Carmen recalled that her father was boarding up the place they stayed in when they came to Canada for the haying season. A priest, a nun and the Indian Agent came to the house and it was then that her life changed forever. Carmen was taken to residential school against the pleas of her parents.

Gelayne is an unreserved First Nations woman of great conviction yet at the same time her mind is burdened with historical struggles. She revealed that she lives within the dominant society but that her spirit is in the First Nations culture; she too has a desire to do something to help her people. As a future social worker, Gelayne knows it is necessary to maintain a reticent nature yet her all-too-suddenly violent personality erupts and she ends up facing legal battles. Gelayne reported having always been a violently natured person and claims that she would react rather than respond to certain situations.

Gelayne entered residential school at the age of 7 and suffered tumultuous years within the boundaries of that environment. She always tried to protect younger girls from violent behaviour and she constantly stuck up for the ones who were abused more often

than the others. Gelayne's temper has not subsided much over the years and she is aware of how much healing she still needs to do in order get past the pain and anger she continues to suffer. Gelayne believes that using traditional and non-traditional healing practices will benefit in repairing the effects of indoctrination that she suffered from her residential school experiences.

Starr, the youngest of the co-researchers is 47 years old. She is a therapist and works in a community leveled by suicide, substance abuse and poverty. She was not a residential school attendee however she is impacted on a lateral level. The elder aunt who raised Starr, as well as her mother who was unable to raise her, attended residential school. Everything Starr's aunt endured and everything she learned in residential school was passed down and affected Starr and her older sibling.

At a very early age Starr and her friends were ostracized for being First Nations people in a white-majority school. She learned how to become tough and began using illicit drugs to hide her pain and emotional emptiness. Starr had a very difficult time overcoming the shame she felt about her growing up years. Her need to work through the shame was still apparent; she revealed that in her present place of healing she is determined to raise her children differently than she was raised. Starr made sure it was known that she adored her elder aunt who raised her and that she was grateful for the upbringing she was given; however, she also made sure to note that her traditional way of life with her husband and children today is what keeps her family strong and united. Starr has worked diligently on her recovery of essence and continues to do so.

Elizabeth is the eldest lady in the group of co-researchers and at 71 years of age, this gregarious, larger than life woman is the epitome of resilience. She has learned to thrive

in the world today but that was not always the case. Elizabeth's philosophy rests in the traditional, spiritual tribal healing practices. She has adopted the traditional way of life after having suffered at the hands of the priests and nuns in one of Alberta's residential schools. Her siblings were also abducted at varying times and her memories are filled with anguish and pain. She prefers not to reiterate stories; however she says that if it will help someone else then she will share her experiences with them.

Elizabeth has traveled extensively with spiritual leaders and has embraced holistic healing through traditional and non-traditional healing practices for many years. She has raised her children to be proud of their heritage and she has had the courage to disclose her experiences of residential school with her children. As she claims, it is never easy to recall but it is healing for her every time she talks about her experiences.

Eddie's, Carmen's, Gelayne's, Starr's, and Elizabeth's narrative accounts of life in residential school confirmed a suspicion from the onset of this study, the theory that the Canadian government and the Churches deliberately embarked on a policy of assimilation through segregation. The harnessing of the Churches to implement this legislation resulted in the assured erasure of First Nations spiritual and cultural traditions. It did not work and many traditions were retained. The five co-researchers agreed on many issues and they all took issue with similar things. One major concern each co-researcher had was the concern of the so-called financial redress from the Canadian government; the input with regard to this matter was the same.

Having given an overview and introduction to the co-researchers, this research will focus on the themes which arose from the shared dialogues.

Creating the Wounded Disconnected Self

As revealed in the previous chapters, the Canadian government and church authorities forcibly abducted children from their families. Against the pleas of the families, these children were placed in residential schools; many children never saw family members again. The decimation of family units resulted in the loss of culture, traditions, and spirituality forcing the children to become immersed in the dominant European culture. It was expected that all the children would grow up to become productive members of white society and leave their ‘savage’ nature behind.

Being Seized and Disbanding Families

Each co-researcher claimed that figures of authority would essentially appear unannounced and forcibly disband families. First Nations children were compulsorily detached from their homes, their families, their culture, language and traditions. It was questionable whether the interpreters or Indian Agents offer an honest rendition of what the priests had told them to say to the parents. The co-researchers thought not. Threats of jail toward First Nations parents was one of the excessive measures used by the RCMP, the Government and the priests to forcibly remove children from their families and to place them in residential school environments. Each person interviewed told of different experiences, yet similar circumstances. Eddie said:

so, ah, at the age of six I went to, I entered the school System at ah St. Mary’s Roman Catholic Indian Residential School and ah for us it was mandatory that we go to school. If our parents kept us beyond ah the age of ah where, when you were supposed to go to school, there would, the police would come and they, they would be ah, told you know, if your, your child isn’t going to go to school, you’re going to

prison. So that was the policy back then, the Government policy, that, that is how I ah went to school.

Elizabeth recalled the set of circumstances which set a bit of a precedent for the Indian Agents and priests when it came time to take any children from her family to residential school. Elizabeth recounted the actions of an Indian Agent and a priest the day they barged onto the reserve unannounced and seized her “second brother”. Elizabeth was not old enough herself to be abandoned into residential school when her second brother was abducted, yet her memory of this solitary event is exemplary. Even though the unwilling surrender of “my first brother” had taken place only a year earlier, she did not remember it but,

the second brother I remember...when they came to get him The Indian Agent and the priest and the interpreter all came down, they had a little old black car, a square car, and they told my dad that they were coming for my brotherthey threatened him [dad] if he doesn't send his kids to school, he will go to jail. So my dad was deathly afraid of the RCMP and jail, so my dad said 'ok, I'll get him', and he went to get my brother.

Elizabeth stated that when it was her turn to go to residential school, taking her from her family was handled in a totally different manner. The Indian Agent, priest and nun did not show up at the family residence to abduct Elizabeth. Due to the former challenge of having to run around after one of her brothers for some time prior to seizing him and taking him to residential school, it had been decided that Elizabeth's experience was to be very different. Her parents drove her to a residential school where other families had

taken their children and while her parents simply appeared to visit with friends and relatives, Elizabeth began to play with other children:

and then when we got to the school we did kind of the routine things and they, my mother visited with her friends and I saw my cousin there and different people I knew and then all of a sudden I got carried away playing with these girls and pretty soon I somebody told me, 'your mom and dad are leaving' and I ran to look and they were already really far and I started to run after them and scream...

Elizabeth told of seeing other children brought in to residential school and she remembers one pair of sisters in particular:

these girls came in and their parents brought them and that one didn't want to stay and she started to throw up, she was vomiting and she kept, and everybody was going up there to check on her and, and the others the older sister had a mop, a pail and a mop and she was cleaning, cleaning and this girl was just really getting sick and I was just watching her and then we all went to bed and then after that I got sick I don't know how long after but I got really sick and I stayed in bed and then I think I'm and now when I look back I was probably traumatized from the whole happening the first time, the first day....

It was revealed that each co-researcher who had attended residential school had been very young when they had been abducted by the priests, nuns, Indian Agents, and interpreters. Carmen had been abducted at the age of four, the youngest of all and had no clue as to what was happening to her; she knew her parents were gone and that her siblings were somewhere on the school property but was not allowed contact with any of them. Carmen, abandoned and lonely wondered, "Why did these people have power over

my parents?" This question plagued her for her many years during her stay at residential school.

Sacrificed, Abandoned and Ensnared Inside a Silent World

According to Eddie's statement, the residential school establishment, the priests and nuns, prohibited all First Nations children from speaking their own language and were adamant that they speak English for the number of years they would be in the school.

Eddie revealed that at the age of six,

I entered the world of silence, you know, even though there were other children around I was forbidden to speak my own language. I didn't know ah English, so I suffered in silence for two, two, three years until I started to learn the language....

I was totally in a foreign world, eh, there were other kids around me who spoke the same language and yet I couldn't talk to them. We were punished for it you know...

Eddie also expressed deep thoughts of abandonment and stated, [others] forget to look at the loneliness as a child, eh, the yearning for your parents, eh, 'where are my parents?', and the longer you're separated, you know, you, you tend to become ah, well, I, I gave up on my parents. 'Well, ok, they're not gonna come for me', actually I said, 'the hell with it', you know, 'I've got to do, I've got to survive, eh'. And that's when survival mode kicked in.

Elizabeth echoed her personal sensitivity to abandonment calling to mind the sequence of events that took place the day she was taken. Elizabeth remembers that it was on a Sunday and she thought she was simply going to church, no different than every Sunday; this day was not ordinary. It had been arranged that all appropriately aged children would be brought, by their parents, to the residential school rather than the church. The parents

visited with other family members who were also at the school and to the children there appeared to be nothing out of the ordinary. Things soon changed. Elizabeth's account of what she remembered about that particular event was articulated:

when we got to the school.... and I got carried away playing with these girls and pretty soon somebody told me, 'your mom and dad are leaving' and I ran to look and they were already really far and I started to run after them and scream and the nun came running and she told those older girls to, to go chase after me and bring me back....and they dragged me back to the school and I was, I was just devastated and I couldn't believe my mother and dad left me like that....I was probably traumatized from the whole thing happening.....

Elizabeth claimed that she always wondered how the parents of all these other children knew to bring them to the residential school rather than to have just another Sunday at church.

Parents were threatened by the government that if they did not send their children to residential school by the time they were of the eligible age to attend, the parents would be incarcerated. Most parents had younger children at home and knew that they had to obey the government orders lest they would be placed in jail and there would be nobody to raise the youngsters left behind. These scare tactics worked as Carmen reiterated, "...we were forced into boarding school" even though her parents tried everything to convince the priest not to take all their children, especially Carmen. She told me that her father had stated, when the priest came to the house to claim the children, "his [Carmen's father] stomach went cold, his legs just went cold and he could have fainted" and the priest reportedly stated, 'we've come to get your kids...we're here to take them to boarding

school'. At the time Carmen was only four years old; her birth certificate was taken and altered by the priests to state that her age was five years old, thus fulfilling, as she suspected, "a quota system". Five children from Carmen's family were taken at one time. Because there were two younger children at home, her parents were compelled to release the five children for fear of being sent to jail leaving no one at home to care for the younger children.

Institutionalized Conditioning and Inhumanity

Narratives of lengthy, repetitive, institutional, conditioned existences exposed the trauma, grief, guilt, shame and anger that each co-researcher experienced. Conditioned, institutionalized inhumanity forced the children to respond to the ringing of a bell or the blowing of a whistle. It was compulsory that children went outside for an hour each day to play – temperature was of no concern to the abusers of power. Eddie commented:

they used to chase us out to play in the winter time and ah, well winters today are not cold. Back then it would be 40 below, wind factor, the chill factor, the wind factor. We used to huddle together to keep warm ...we'd huddle together you know sort of like cattle to keep warm and the nun would be looking at us from way up the stairs and she had a whistle and ah she'd whistle, 'break it up, don't bunch up' you know, so we had to go our separate ways....

Children were compelled to obey or they would be severely punished; Carmen stated:

on the minute we'd wake up in the morning the sister would ring the bell and the minute we heard the bell, we were trained to respond to the bell as soon as it rings...so we would get up and the minute we get up we get on our knees and we pray on that hardwood floor and I don't know who I prayed to but I sure learned the prayers good,

I didn't know who God was, and I didn't know, I didn't....

The harsh conditioning became rigidly obligatory. Day after day following morning Chapel the nuns granted some time to the children so they could go into the playroom, a place where fear should have been replaced with more appropriate child-like wonders. Punishments, Chapel, confession, school, and other duties such as meals and personal hygiene took up so much of the children's days. Some play time had to be granted to demonstrate appropriate evenhandedness yet as the children played they were reminded:

the minute you hear the bell, you stop right where you're at, no matter what you're doing, you stop, so we would stop and then they would march us all down in a straight file again and Sister was walk, would walk us right to our classrooms.

Without fail, a nun would "ring that bell" and the expected reaction either took place immediately or beatings with a long ruler that the nuns carried with them ensued.

Carmen expressed that emotional and physical cruelty was compounded by more examples of institutionalized treatment edging on abuse:

I don't know how many times we went down on our knees but there's hardwood floor and this course salt and she would, the sister, would pour that salt all on the floor and then we'd lift our dresses and we'd kneel right in that salt and we would kneel according to our numbers ...and she would stand right behind you and all the girls would be watching and you and you didn't get to adjust your knees or adjust the salt on your skin and you just kneel in it till you go numb then they make us say those um prayers and I don't know, there's an Act of Tri, Act of Contrition...

The conditioning continued in the playground during exercise periods. Carmen stated: there's a conditioning process with that bell almost like to ah my goodness a

concentration camp, and the minute you hear that bell you stop on a dime, you don't even breathe, you just stop and wait for the command as it were and so she'd come out, ring the bell and we'd be kneeling in the um in the dirt, you know, we'd be kneeling in the falling leaves, we would be all kneeling on the ground saying rosaries while she gets to sit in the chair you know, and I could never see the fairness in that....

Gelayne recalled the absolute rigidity and lack of privacy/dignity of life in residential school and stated:

I think for me, the rigidity of it all, the getting up, being told when to eat, when to sleep, when to bath, I mean when we shower, we all shower together; I was so embarrassed, like I, you know, I, I couldn't understand, the only one I would see naked is my sisters, and my and my mom and to us that was just natural, you know and um there it felt so unnatural um and, and um I don't know, I, I really was mixed up...

Gelayne struggled with not even knowing how to dress herself without institutional instruction; the conditioning promoted emotional suffering for her as she grew up. Scorn and ridicule came from people within the dominant European society, as well as from some members of Gelayne's own tribal Reservation, further encouraged personal collapse. Gelayne cried as she exposed evidence of her own conditioned, institutionalized history:

I didn't even know how to dress myself properly, my whole life, people have told me what to wear, even in prison, they gave me the clothes and everything, so didn't even know that ... when I see the bigger picture of how residential school really affected us down the line and it was a major factor for me being in jail...and that's my main issue,

residential school. I really believe that we have to be deprogrammed before we can go on...

Deprogramming was actually not an option for the populace who came from the residential school system and continued to exist within a prison system. Anyone needed their wits about them as an 'insider' and it was certainly required to know how to play a new game. In residential school there were no protective resources to tap into, as all victims were on their own. Ingrained into the 'beingness' of each victim, all five co-researchers articulated that the traumatically conditioned events remain with them and serve as interjected judgments to this day. First Nations people who attended residential school are damaged from the experiences; the willful programming into the dominant society was forced upon those who were sacrificed and abandoned into the residential school system through no fault of their own. Gelayne plainly remarked, "I guarantee you, that any survivor lives with guilt".

In summary, conditioned, institutionalized living became the way of life for this sub-culture within the dominant society. As a 'throw-away' segment of humanity, egalitarian consciousness was never measured; fairness was never considered in relation to children who unwillingly surrendered, children who became targets of religious authority, children under duress, stripped of their intrinsic way of life. There was no consideration for any child's family cultural and traditional lifestyle. Moreover, during the time spent within the confines of residential school, no child was ever considered to be an autonomous human being.

Like a Prison: Fighting for Survival

Victimization in residential school created the perfect basis to acquire the skills necessary to secure the skills to survive in prison. Many women and men who attended residential school have been to jail and/or prison. The lone gentleman in the group of co-researchers, Eddie, reported that at residential school:

it was terrible. There were a lot of times where we ah where we suffered you know, including kids were mean to each other you know we suffered a lot, ah kids were violent towards each other and ah it's like the prison system, you had to pay for your protection ah in the form of giving up your dessert to the older child that was protecting

you so you learn a lot about the prison system in residential schooling...

Eddie remarked at one point how the treatment within the residential schools was not a lot different from being in jail – in effect he felt that the residential school experience paved the way to jail cells for many victims. At this juncture Eddie giggled, then on a more serious note, stated:

...it's a survival thing, eh, so and you also learn how to fight eh because ah you have nobody there to protect you...

Eddie and Gelayne revealed that historically they both were more at ease in jail cells than they were living in the real world facing their daily challenges. Jails and prisons felt like comfortable surroundings for those who left residential school and attempted to live, as Gelayne put it, “out there” within the boundaries of the governing society. Struggles within the mainstream of European culture evoked unkind attention and further defeated the internal locus of control for many First Nations people.

It is questionable whether well adjusted children have the intrinsic resources to express their feelings appropriately; the children in residential school were forbidden to express themselves at all. The nuns were extremely strict and enforced their steadfast practices of inflexibility thus there was no time for the children to reflect upon their historical family culture, their spirituality or their traditions.

Reduced to a Number

New and painful experiences for the children were exacerbated by their lack of understanding as to why they were in such a cruel environment. Their inability to understand or speak the strange new language only compounded matters further; when personal belongings, clothes, shoes, socks, were taken away from them without explanation, boarding school clothing, shoes and socks were provided. Demands were placed upon each child to wear certain clothing during their stay in residential school as Carmen revealed:

they um stripped us buck naked and um gave us the wrong clothes and my number was [##] all the years that I was there and so they ah explained to us that the ... shoes and the ...socks were mine, you know my number [##], you remember you don't touch no one's clothes but his number and so um and then they took all our clothes and then we were made to shower and then they checked our hair for head lice and then they took all our clothes and they said that at the end of the year we could get our clothes back, well being that small you can't tell, you know, what's the end of the year...

Eddie, Carmen, Gelayne and Elizabeth all spoke of being given numbers as the only means of personal identification. Each child who attended residential school was

identified by numbers. It did not matter which residential school was attended, the system was uniform with regard to numbering human beings. As each child was relieved of their traditional clothing, shoes, moccasins, socks, and undergarments, they were provided with uniforms; the girls got government issued dresses, saddle shoes, a coat and socks along with undergarments, and bedding. The boys received government issued pants, coat, shirts, socks, shoes/boots and undergarments and bedding. Absolutely no personal possessions were permitted to remain and the 'cleansing' of the First Nations children was done quickly.

Eddie jokingly remarked that it was not much different than the government issuing Social Insurance cards in this day and age, or when one enters the jail system they are known as a number:

Ah, well those were, the first few years were really rough – I was given a number and today the government still hands you out numbers, so ah, my, my, I remember my first number ...[##]. And I was that for a few, my, my name was put aside and... They would just say my number and I would immediately jump up. All my clothes were labeled with that number and that's all I know was that number for a few years. Ah, when I grew up, ah I went to jail, again I was given a number – and some only got reduced to being a number after that...at the age of six to I'd say about ten, those were really the rough years....

Carmen spoke in a similar vein when she told of acquiring the number that would follow her for the rest of her life:

I had that number all the years that I was there and so they ah explained to us that the black and white shoes that they had and the ankle socks were mine, you know, my

number, you remember you don't touch no one's clothes but this number and so um
and then they took all our clothes and then we, they made us shower...

This upset Carmen because being so young she did not understand anything that was going on. She had never been away from her family before and at the age of four, she was confused.

Gelayne entered residential school with her little sister. Gelayne did not understand what was happening any more than did the other co-researchers who experienced residential school. Gelayne said:

ah, I remember going to the residential school with my little sister and they started giving us clothes and everything seemed to be marked with numbers and ah, I remember bringing us upstairs and showing us our little boxes where we keep our clothes, our school clothes and our play clothes and the bed that I would be sleeping on

There were times when Gelayne thought she was never going to survive in residential school or to succeed in the world outside prison walls and believed that the institutionalization organized and provided by residential schools had marked her for life. When she was asked if she thought that feelings of comfort she felt while in jail had come from her institutionalized way of life at residential school, Gelayne replied:

I really believe so, I do, um it, it constantly being told what to do, um it's drummed into your head along with that number, it's like you know, that's your number, it stays on you your going to and um to be recognized just as a number and be told everything what to do you, ah you get into that mode where you think, 'alright, this is, this is how it really it is' and I really, really believed them when they said that um Native people

were less superior to, to non-Natives especially the nuns and priests 'cause we were always going to hell.

According to Eddie, Carmen, Gelayne, and Elizabeth whether it was going to Hell, going to jail, or going to residential school, it all equated to the same thing. Starr was subjected to the intergenerational effects her elder aunt and primary caregiver had experienced. Starr vicariously experienced similar sentiments to what the other four co-researchers shared about their victimization by the government system at residential school.

A Gross Lack of Nurturing and Nourishment

During their time at residential school the four co-researchers remarked how insensitive their caregivers had been toward them. They reported that as children nurturing was not forthcoming when they cried and they were forced to do things that psychologically impacted them in negative ways.

Eddie reported that he had actually learned not to cry or to show emotion:

as a child growing up I was told don't cry, it was instilled in me and like ah if you, if you get hurt you know in school or if you get strapped for something you, you, your supervisor would tell you don't cry and if you cry they'll tell you, 'Ill give you something to cry about' so they, they put the stick to you or whatever, so I grew up, I, I, didn't cry and today, I, I struggle with that still...

Carmen's interjected messages live in her psyche and she claims that today she can eat anything because of the food she was forced to eat in residential school:

I've been so psychologically conditioned to look the other way, we would be served porridge and there'd be worms in there, there'd be pink worms still crawling in

those things and then I don't know if it was from the milk I don't know what it was but there was pink worms, and even in the corn meal there was pink worms and then sometimes the rice would have worms in them and so they'd have um rice with raisins and sugar and of course there's those little pink worms but ah the first time the little girls wouldn't eat them be we all got hit with that long ruler and so um and there was a lot of foods where in we were not accustomed to a lot of them.

Carmen continued:

I don't even know what I ate but she would beat it into us to make us, she'd stand behind us and them sisters would take them rulers and hit us you know over the back of your head, over back of our shoulders and she'd stand there and she would take the fork or spoon and she'll shovel into our mouth and so we'd try and hide the taste of what we were eating with salt and so um anyways but they would physically beat us to eat that food so finally we learned to just eat it, look the other way so um today um I can eat a worm in the porridge, I can I can almost eat anything because they forced us to eat it....

Eddie's experiences were reminiscent of Carmen's when he stated:

You know we had terrible, terrible food, we were hungry a lot of the times. Um, they used to they used to feed us green eggs. Green, green eggs. The eggs were green when they were scrambled, um, pea soup, it was green, ah I don't know if you've ever had pea soup but it was terrible...

Poignant Losses of Family Culture

Eddie, Carmen, Gelayne, Elizabeth and Starr reported that the church forcibly removed spirituality, language, song, stories, tradition, and culture from many First

Nations peoples' lives as soon as they were mandated to attend residential school. For many years they were dominated, as if under a form of control, by the overriding culture within the environment of residential school; each co-researcher revealed having experienced feelings of misplacement within the construct of daily life.

Loss of Familial Self

After having being taken from their parents and placed into the residential school system, many First Nations children were then separated from their sisters and brothers; there was never any contact with older or younger family members. However, the children who were in the same areas of the residential school as their brothers and sisters could communicate with each other. Carmen recalls:

So um my brothers um two brothers um James and Evan they were on the boy's side; I knew we were together but I'd never seen them in all the years we were there; and so my sisters were um big girls, intermediate and big girls, and I never seen my sisters either so they were someplace, but I knew I wasn't alone but we were never allowed to see each others and um little girls played on um on the little girls' um playroom and then the little girls slept in our own dorm on the very top floor and so um my bed was on the east side of the um boarding school near the windows....

Carmen continued to explain about the painful isolation from family members and spoke of experiences her parents told her of the times they had come to the residential school to try and visit with her and her brothers and sisters:

When my mom and dad come to see us they were told they couldn't see us. (!)My dad said, 'I don't know how many times we went to see you and we didn't get to see you', so they let us go in September and they didn't see us till December and when my

mom did see me she didn't know who I was 'cause I had short curly you know little teeny hair and then um I was um abused in school, and she seen me I had my arm in a cast and my arm had, had been broken just above the elbow and so I was um I was abused by not just the staff but by the students....

For Carmen, her parents allowing her to be taken to residential school led to dissolution of her family. Carmen stated:

so ah, from the boarding school, um my mom's name is Mary and I don't call her mom, I call her Mary and my dad's name is Lawrence and I don't call him dad and I, and I never will and I never did and I'll never call my mom, mom, and I'll never call her anything but Mary because the church took that from us, the boarding schools took that away from us and so um they're my friends now, my parents are my friends but the church took that away that we could say mom and dad, you know....

Similar sentiments were expressed by Eddie when he related to John Bowlby's (1988)

Theory on attachment as a child growing up in residential school:

um they, um as a child growing up ah in the residential school, I, I ah, because we didn't get the love, the affection ah from our parents, we like, ah you must have heard about John Bowlby's Theory ...you know, when a child is left alone, they turn ah inwards and they become cold, and that's exactly how I grew up and I only found that out when I was, when I did go to university, in my third year of university, ah and that's when I , you know had an awareness of what the residential school system did to me and ah I became angry....

Eddie's remembrances of the loneliness he felt when his parents failed to come and take him from residential school were expressed:

they forget to look at the loneliness as a child, eh, the yearning for your parents, eh, 'where are my parents?' and the longer you're separated, you know, you, you tend to become ah, well I, I gave up on my parents, 'well, ok, they're not gonna come for me', actually I said, 'the hell with it, you know, I've got to do, I've got to survive', eh. And that's when survival mode kicked in eh. And so I became very independent... I learned to be deviant, very deviant, I was angry...

All of Eddie's moments of isolation from residential school flooded back to him years later when he was doing time in jail and he said that he experienced:

an overwhelming feeling of loneliness. So that must have been a trigger that brought back memories for me. And when you hear the wind blowing through the windows, that is a, you know that's a, that's a, that's a very lonely experience for me and a lot of those things I think we suppress you know but from time to time you know, it ah, something triggers them.

Loss of Freedom

Eddie affirmed:

My freedom was totally taken away from me...the residential school took away my culture, that was one of the worst things that it did to me, eh...the values we have lost, ah, through our language, the loss of the language...when those big doors closed behind me, that's when I lost my freedom, so ah I was punished for pretty well everything – speaking my language, not putting on my clothes, ah and then you get used to doing something, eh, and then you're thrown into this whole new world, eh, it was ah, I didn't know what to make of it, you know, I was, I was totally in a foreign world, eh, there were other kids around me who spoke the same language and yet I

couldn't talk to them. We were punished for it, you know....

Eddie was not alone in speaking about loss of freedom. Gelayne explained that she felt a loss of freedom to even speak out loud for fear of getting beaten. When Gelayne was five or six years old during her first year at residential school she recalled:

I was SO SCARED.... I learned not to say anything, it was easier to be quiet and not say anything Um, if you talked then one way or another it'll come to you and you'll end up getting hit even if it is not your fault so a lot of us learned not to say anything....

Elizabeth explained how she felt about her loss of religious freedom by not being permitted to practice her religion; she went on to explain how she feels it has affected her self as well as the other children with whom she attended residential school. Elizabeth said that at the residential school which she attended:

Their first priority was to teach us religion and then to call down our religion and that, I don't know I think I was big enough you know I really believe the part about children's psychology they say children learn the most when they are really tiny and I think that's what happened to all, to most of us because we remembered and we never forgot even though we never talked about it, it was there forever and, and we, we couldn't ah, it, it kind of, we kind of put it on the back burner but it was always there...

The individual loss of freedom for each Eddie, Gelayne, and Elizabeth speak to their soul wounds. Dominant culture insensitivities forced these individuals, as very young children, to block out their traditional freedom to religion, to individual family customs and to the ability to speak openly. The losses of freedom which each co-researcher experienced lingers. Personal demoralizing familiarity is endured forty five years or more

after actuality. Eddie, Carmen, Gelayne, Starr, and Elizabeth told of how they were relegated to degrading inhumane behaviour, behaviour that bore witness to severe conduct. From their perspectives no two children were ever treated similarly to the others and in some cases the nuns preferred some over others. Further derision of self-worth continued.

Loss of Distinction and Dignity

There is no evidence that a verifiable equity of child management existed in the residential school system since most First Nations children were immediately hated and maltreated as soon as they entered residential school; a very select few, it was reported by Gelayne, however, that the nuns had chosen favorites. These favored ones doled out the sexual abuse and beatings on the children who were not favored. The abused children were confused and humiliated about being subjected to such abhorrent acts. They could never trust their peers.

Eddie, Carmen, Gelayne, and Elizabeth claimed that for many years children were sexually abused and beaten inside the walls of residential schools. They were harshly dealt with if they informed the nuns of these degrading experiences so, for the most part, they learned to look the other way. It was not until long afterward in life that Gelayne met one of the girls she went to residential school with. Gelayne was told by this now grown woman, one whom the nuns favored, that the nuns insisted she and others commit the degrading abuse or they too would suffer brutal retaliation from the nuns:

they taught, they taught us right from the get-go, um, I had ah, actually seen some of the girls run and try and tattle tale, in fact they got in more trouble when they did tell the truth, not only from the nuns but then later on when they came back from the

other girls, especially the older girls;

Gelayne continued:

I didn't know that, that time the older girls were ta, were um taught to um abuse the younger girls um and if they weren't I guess they were given a harder time, um may of the girls that I, that I was um in residential school with, many of them have died but when I did have a chance to talk to some of them and I asked them about how they treated us that young, that was the first answers that, that they were told, they were told that they had had to do this and keep us in line or else they would suffer....

When asked if the nuns had forced the girls to commit such obscenities Gelayne responded, "...mhhmm, mhhmm, yeah...I would say kind of like a Dictatorship..."

Eddie talked earlier bout how his loss of freedom affected him when he was "thrown into this whole new world"; he recalled that he "was totally in a foreign world" which did not acknowledge his First Nations heritage with his own belief system. Eddie and other children around him were treated with far less dignity than their cultural heritage demanded and Eddie said that his dignity was lowered to such extremes that he became an abuser of alcohol at an early age:

so ah, I eventually started drinking at a young age.... and, I, I started drinking when I was in high school playing basketball experimenting with alcohol ah but all those issues that I, you know, lived with, you know the residential school took away my culture – that was one of the worst things that it did to me eh ...

Eddie continues to worry about his community and his people today. He worries about the ones who have experienced first hand the abuses perpetrated upon their bodies and their minds. In the work he does, Eddie is involved with the residential school survivors

as well as with those who are intergenerationally impacted by the experiences. He treats each human being with respect and dignity, something they are not at all familiar with, yet Eddie perseveres; he knows where his background of abuse led him and he is giving some distinction and dignity to those who still suffer the indignities of residential school abuse.

Loss of Self Worth through Abuse

Mockery became a practice which was encouraged by the nuns particularly if a young child, as Eddie remarked, “maybe out of loneliness” wet the bed during the night. Eddie recalled one residential school ‘tradition’ that was carried out by one particular nun if she found out there had been an incident of bed wetting:

and I remember the nun woke us up one night [s]he was ripping everything apart, sheets, and [s]he was hitting the kids and we were ah, kind of scared eh, so they brought us all down to the playroom and we had to sit all, all, all around the playroom and those boys who wet their beds were, they were naked and they were face down on the floor, eh, and ah, “Well, I’ll teach you guys to wet your beds” ah, and the nun started walking back and forth over them with her shoes...

Although Gelayne did not personally experience the embarrassment of bedwetting, she articulated her experiences of witnessing the humiliation that two of her childhood companions suffered. Gelayne stated that when she attended residential school it was expected that children were to get up to use the bathroom during the night when necessary. One memory Gelayne carries with her to this day is when two of her room mates wet their beds:

and I remember these two girls they were pur, purposefully by the bathroom

because they would wet their beds and what would happen if they wet their beds and the nun found out she would take them and put their faces in the sheets to smell their own urine and then would make them take their blankets and everything off and put it in the middle of the floor for all of us to see and then she would start getting mad, telling us to look at them, you know, they're babies, they don't know how to get up in the middle of the night, they're lazy and um I really believed that and a lot of girls really picked on them ... they were actually treated worse than me...

Carmen reported that she has been permanently physically and emotionally damaged from one particular incident she has not been able to forget. As previously mentioned, Carmen was taken to residential school at the age of four and knew nothing of formal schooling:

um, grade one I did not know math, I didn't know what, you know, what one plus one was but I always remember um that um the punishment I got for not knowing math. I'm um I'm currently half-deaf in my right ear because she (Sister Mary Joseph) backhanded me and um and, and I was pretending to do my homework and I was I always remember sitting there, I remember my desk facing west and I, I remember my door, my, my desk being by the door to the hallway and, and she would walk back and forth and make sure we were doing our homework and she had her long black, oh whatever those dresses were...

Carmen explained further:

she always had her long ruler with her and she would hit us gently with this like ah prodding a horse to hurry up and so when she knew I was stuck and she blew up and, and told me how stupid I was, you know, "Stupid Indian" and I don't know what

she said, she said some kind of an, I don't know, if it was a French word, God knows what it was, but I always remember her backhanding me with the back of her knuckles and knocked me into the aisle...

Carmen reported being physically and emotionally stunned; she gave an account of the nun running around the end of the desks towards her while she was still on her hands and knees in the aisle:

and she picked me up by my shoulders and just slammed me into the chair, into the desk and I peed all over myself and then she hit me with the ruler again and, and I was crying and she hit me and told me to shut up and quit crying....

Carmen's physical and emotional abuse at the hands of the nun foreshadowed further dehumanization:

I became a joke of the kids for the longest time 'cause I mean she made me pee all over myself by just slamming me in, in the desk and, and I remember peeing down my legs and seeing my pee all over the floor and, and my ear was red, and it was ringing...

Loss of Emotional and Spiritual Connection

While attending residential school First Nations children were subjected to emotionally and physically painful experiences very early on and any familial ties were eroded. The words 'residential school' soon became synonymous to physical and spiritual pain along with emotional detachment. Starr was intergenerationally impacted by residential school and had not endured the experiences first hand, yet when asked to evaluate what the words, 'residential school' meant to her, she remarked:

when I hear 'residential school', the thing that really stands out for me is emotional loss ...and if you look at the holistic wheel, they provided the, the Christian teaching,

spirituality, they, you went to school, that was your mind, and physical, you were fed and you were clothed but there was no nurturing, there was no (Blackfoot word), a lot of the kids who cry, cried themselves to sleep and nobody there to comfort them and to tell them it was going to be ok so they just go into a shell and they harden their heart and that's how they survived in there and then they came out and that's how they raise their kids. I never felt that emotional connection...

Stories of *Star Baby* and *Napi the Trickster* were told in Starr's home but family stories were not. Starr never knew about her family of origin, the history of her family, or who her mother and father were; she never knew the language and was never brought up to speak the native tongue. When the Blackfoot language was spoken in the home Starr did not understand and her aunt would get angry at her for not knowing the language. This further cemented the cultural void and widened Starr's abyss of emotional loss.

Elizabeth understood the loss of emotional connection with her family and her culture and grieves that loss to this day; her main focus however is on the spiritual losses she suffered. During the course of her narrative, Elizabeth told of how she had to meet the criteria required to acquire monetary redress from the Canadian government. She stated that money would be awarded automatically to anyone, "likely everyone who got whipped or beaten" however, if skin was torn or blood was shed, more money was allotted, just as extra money was given to those who suffered sexual abuse. Elizabeth said that she had asked the lawyer:

and I told him, what about genocide because they used to ah forbid us to speak our language and sing our songs and all this stuff and he said 'no, not recognized' and I said for me that was worse than any skin that was torn or any ah priest that grabbed

my breast or anything or anytime that I was punished or whipped that was the worst thing, was the taking away of the spirit....I really truly believe from experience it's the spirit and that's where today damaged us, they took away our songs, our way of prayer...

Elizabeth acknowledged how deep yet how unrecognized that loss has been.

Loss of Comforting Attention

It was reported that there was no comforting or mothering attention provided to the children during times of sickness or injury. Sick and/or injured children were 'put away' and ignored. Being 'put away' was explained by the co-researchers as meaning that sick or injured children were banished to the top floor of the residential school. They were all alone up there with nobody available to nurture their physical or spiritual needs. They were left alone until better or until the worst happened and they died.

Eddie spoke to this lack of nurturing as only an expert could. While working through some of his historic issues surrounding abandonment, Eddie declared that he had never been hugged and he had never heard that he was loved between the times he entered residential school until he met his present-day wife. Eddie stated while working on his personal issues:

and another thing I, I, I, I found out was you know when you're sick, when I'm sick I want to be alone all the time and that's from because, because of the experience that we suffered as children we were you know we were brought up, upstairs and we were left alone eh, ho, no body you know to comfort us so today when I get sick I, I got to my room and I shut the lights off. I want to be alone, totally alone. So those are just, I'm just recognizing some of the things that I do you know as a result of the boarding

school...there's ah there's a lot of things that have impacted my life because of that.

Starr could empathize with the residential school survivors regarding the matters of abandonment and suffering loneliness when ill or injured. This had been imposed on her aunt at residential school and was imprinted in the elder's psyche. Starr was raised with love but the lack of nurturing was apparent as she grew up. She knew her aunt loved her in a special way and as she grew older, she began to understand and accept why the nurturance was not there for her when she herself was sick or injured.

Gelayne recalled an experience during her first year at residential school having to do with an injury she received as a result of a sledding accident. As a young child Gelayne loved to go sledding in the fresh snow and as she brought to mind one particular event, she pointed to a dreadful scar which was clearly visible on her forehead. She stated:

when I was, the first year I remember... we were out sleighing one evening and um I got sliced on my head right here, when the sled it flipped up and sliced my head and um they put me w-a-y upstairs, there's one room it's like the hospital room, and it's so white like your eyes are just blinded when you go in there, everything is so white and there's I think about three beds and I was in that room and well, I, I don't know if it was a month but I remember I was kept away from the others and ah I think that things like that hardened me because when I did go to jail and they put me in a cell by myself I felt so comfortable.

When asked if Gelayne felt that she had been abandoned into isolation she replied, "Yeah, yeah, and when ah in the prison when I would act up they of course would put me in the hole and that and that wouldn't even bother me, it was like a vacation....".

Elaborating further, Gelayne claimed that her preparatory requirements for "a life of

hell”, living in and out of jail as an adult, had been met through the residential school’s abandonment and isolation program, meted out at the hands of the dominant society to ill children, as well as spiritually, emotionally, and psychologically wounded children.

Elizabeth’s memories of her first day and subsequent days on the top floor at residential school are very clear and she was swift to recall her experiences of being sick. Elizabeth again recollected watching two new girls who had arrived at the residential school the same day she had and spoke of how sick one of them had become. Elizabeth recalled how that girl’s sister had to clean up her sister’s vomit. Elizabeth then stated:

this girl was just really getting sick and I was just watching her and then we all went to bed and then after that I got sick, I don’t know how long after but I got really sick and I stayed in bed and then I think I’m now when I look back I was probably traumatized from the whole thing happening the first time, the first day and then it was compounded with that being in the dorm and it was dark, they wouldn’t put the lights on and there was just a whole room of beds and I was really scared and the lights were like way far away, and way down 4 storeys down you could hear the kids screaming and playing and making noise but it was way down and these other storeys, storeys were just empty and real quiet it seemed like there was nobody there and then I was way on the top and then the wind would come and it would blow through those old windows and it sounded really spooky and I would just be scaring myself, scaring myself you know and then I don’t know, I just was sick for and after I was used to get sick all the time for the first year and I never remem...I never knew to this day, I don’t know if it was a flu or whether it was something that was natural or just caused from what I went through, maybe that is my way of coping with it, I don’t know....

Elizabeth recounted her feelings of being overwhelmed as a small child when she entered into the residential school system. As far as this child's understanding went, she could not justify how her parents could have just left her the way they did:

they [nuns] dragged me back to the residential school and I was, I was just devastated and I couldn't believe my mother and dad left me like that and I, right there I must have had some traumatization about neglect, ah not neglect, but abandonment cause I couldn't figure out how could they leave me...

Throughout all the recollections which Eddie, Carmen, Gelayne, Starr and Elizabeth recounted, the most prevalent themes were trauma and/or vicarious trauma along with grief, guilt, shame and anger.

Self-Betrayal to Survive

After the majority of First Nations people left the confines of the compulsory residential school system, five 'demons' left with them to accompany them into unfamiliar dominant society, [historic] trauma, grief, guilt, shame and anger. Void of any understanding of the spiritual/cultural abuse and intense suffering that this populace of First Nations individuals had endured behind the walls of residential school, each individual was expected to have become prepared to fit into the dominant society.

In order to survive from one moment to another in residential school, the majority of First Nations people reluctantly betrayed their own culture, and traditions, but the deepest scars are manifest from having to forsake their individual spiritual identities. In a forced attempt to fit into the dominant society sacrifices were made; overwhelming personal losses and 'soul wounds' arose causing trauma/ grief/ guilt and shame/ and anger to reign in the lives of many First Nations people. The five 'demons', trauma, grief, guilt, shame,

and anger are shared by Eddie, Carmen, Gelayne, Starr, and Elizabeth in the following dialogues. It is prudent to keep in mind that each co-researcher is on a journey of recovery nevertheless each one is negatively affected, and may always be, by the disturbing events of their residential school experiences whether first hand or through intergenerational familiarity. Historic trauma, grief, guilt, shame and anger are even more complicated and difficult to contend with when healing has not yet begun. The following reminiscences portray of the atrociousness of the conduct.

Trauma Wounds: Internalizing Self-rejection

Common to all co-researchers was the expression of historic trauma – trauma that has followed the generations of First Nations people for years and continues to permeate the lives of some First Nations children. Historic trauma involves a multiplicity of experiences for First Nations people and ranges from the signing of the Treaties, to the relegation of First Nations people to reserves, to the spiritual and cultural genocide from within the walls of residential school, thus leaving a legacy of pain and dissolution of First Nations pride in its wake. Prior to residential schools First Nations people lived in harmony with nature, largely trauma free, spiritually and culturally in touch with their extended family members regardless of how far in distance they lived from each other.

Elizabeth remembered when she had lived with her family prior to the residential school experiences that they would go visit relatives and friends in the United States and they lived a traditional lifestyle as afforded them by their ancestors. She stated that once the effects of isolation on reservations took over it was different:

we knew everybody so they had um lived their life style was, was surrounded by ah looking, always looking for food and always um camping, looking for medicines and

that was the whole a foundation for their lifestyles so when they got on the reserve my dad used to tell me after when the older people realized what had happened, like it was so devastating they'd sit with a, they'd just take a blanket and they'll go sit somewhere along something, a building or a rock, they'll put the blanket over like this (demonstrating) and they'll just sit there till they die.

Elizabeth elaborated on her father's story:

He said a lot of people died like that, all older people, he said that because they were, they didn't see a reason I guess to live what situation that they were in and I remember when I was little there was like no wild life on the reserve at all because there was just no deers or anything and they couldn't go out to the mountains to get elk or moose and it was just we were just living there continually looking for food and I think today it has continued and today it's welfare and the people go for their welfare cheque ...

Starr openly conveyed how historic trauma of residential school impacted her people and how this trauma continues to pervade the lives of those living in her community.

Starr expressed a connection between historic trauma and the unforgettable number of deaths which occur in her world and how that spins into crisis for everyone connected to the community/family:

our community is in crisis every time some body passes away, we're just in crisis and because it triggers um it triggers so much of our own stuff that we've never dealt with and we just go into crisis and but I think when some body is in crisis they, they need the first thing they need is familiarity and their family, their family is familiar....

Starr agreed that historic trauma is what keeps a person grounded in the grief, guilt, shame and anger that is so widespread and felt so deeply within many First Nations communities.

Starr's statement demonstrates that the effects of historic trauma are borne in the spirits of the people and have become openly apparent within the communities through the abuse of alcohol and other substances in order to deal with the trauma; the lack of understanding surrounding historic trauma outside the First Nations communities, and sometimes from within, is a factor which causes survivors to become re-traumatized on a daily basis; thus the 'soul wounds' remain raw and open. Under pressure each day, struggling to endure haunting pain with no anticipation of recovery, many First Nations adults are left emotionally out of touch. Starr expressed that her mother, grandmother, aunts, and uncles are not on healing journeys and she stated:

my aunties, my uncles and not knowing that they have to go kind of go back to that place and I guess retrace those steps and go back to that childhood and heal what needs to be healed...

Something else Starr revealed as being traumatic for her is that a great many First Nations people are not willing to go to that place they need to go to in order to begin healing their personal 'soul wounds':

and there was just too much shame, too much shame to talk about ...yeah even now, 'cause you'll hear it back home, you'll hear people saying, 'are we STILL talking about the residential school, are we STILL talking about the past, you know, are we STILL; and so there's, there's still people still you know people don't want to go there...

For Gelayne, her need to talk about the traumatic injustices she suffered at residential school were all in the name of healing; however, when asked by some women in one of her university classes to explain how she felt, she tried to shed light on her feelings in a way the others might understand. Her attempts at sharing her feelings were not rewarding at all and Gelayne remarked:

I trusted those girls because they're Native and so I did that but yet they turned around and in the name of wanting to help me they only hurt me...they must have seen my life as still very chaotic...I was insulted, I felt like they were condescending, they were patronizing me especially when they said, 'well, do you want to vent?' I was so hurt...

Gelayne revealed that she was devastated and offended when these First Nations women whom she felt she could trust said it would be good to let her have 'one day to vent all her pain about her experiences at residential school'. Gelayne claims that it will take her a lifetime to discuss the effects residential school had on her. Trauma has not left Gelayne's life, nor has it escaped Carmen's either.

Carmen suffers trauma because of events such as sexual abuse, physical abuse along with cultural and spiritual degradation. Carmen feels that these events directly result from the church's doctrinaire techniques even though they were inflicted on Carmen by a priest long after she had left residential school. During a period in her life when her children were small, her marriage began to deteriorate so she went to seek guidance from a member of the clergy. The priest she went to see had been at residential school but had remained in the community to become a parish priest at a white Catholic church. Carmen revealed:

and um so I went there to see Father Paul and then ah I knocked at the door and when I knocked at the door and as we were taught in boarding school you, you say thank you, ah and please, and no thank you, and you know all we were taught you know how to be cordial, so I stuck my hand out being you know this good little Christian and so he was the same priest that my husband and I would serve and my boys served under him as alter boys so he knew my family quite well....and I mean, I was, that church was my whole life and so um Father Paul too I learned that he was part of the church but according to the Catholic church and the way I was brought up HE WAS GOD!!! So I went to see Father Paul this day after I made a call, got a call from Washington DC, that I could go under the Relocation act and um I stuck my hand out and when I stuck my hand out to, to greet him and I was going to I, my, I had my whole heart in my throat and I hurt because I needed to cry so bad and I wanted some direction from the church, what should I do with this man that abandoned me and the kids and, and um and so um what Father Paul did instead of grabbing my hand, he grabbed my a left breast and the thumb was on top and the hands were down here, and like and I just kinda recoiled and 'oh my God, you know' and then um you know and I thought 'did this happen?' and so I, I proceeded and, and, and me like he did not touch my hand but yet I stuck my hand straight out in front of me as I was taught to but he reached past and grabbed a the left breast and ah, and got a good firm grip...but see even now today years later I can still feel the thumb on top where he squeezed my breast...

Carmen related that this shocking experience made her even doubt herself, causing her to become particularly skeptical that this man of God had truly performed such an act.

Throughout the following days of the month Carmen's mind allowed her to convince her that she had imagined the whole thing, so in another attempt to seek marriage guidance, Carmen returned once again to the door of Father Paul:

Well, a month passed by and then I convinced myself that I imagined it and oh, that he's a man of God he wouldn't do that and so a month later I went to see him again and this time my husband was still ah out there carrying on and so I went to see him a second time, this time he was just coming out of the Catholic church and he was going into his, into his house and so this time...

Carmen continued to speak:

I was crying and then he seen me crying and so he unlocked his kitchen door, back kitchen door, I followed him in and he leaned against his cupboard and then I stood there crying with my hands over my eyes and then he pulled me to him and he held me he just in, in his arms and just let me cry, and cry, and cry. I exhausted my tears and um this time when he got through listening to me crying and lifted my face and he kissed me right on my mouth so hard that my teeth just hurt.

Overwhelmed by the priest's behaviour, Carmen lashed out:

and, and so and this time, I, I, reality hit and I grabbed him by his, and then I you know his, his, ah his top and threw him down on the floor and I, I swore some good cuss words at him and then I said to him, 'the first time you did that to me I thought I imagined it, I thought I was crazy' I told him, I says, 'but' I said, um, I said, 'I hate you and I hate the church because you represent the Church'.

Suffering humiliation, Carmen stated:

...well, next Sunday my husband made me go to church again and um so when I stood

there in church and there's Father Paul looking right into my face again and then that was when I got so repulsed and I just you know I had silent tears and I walked out and then of course my husband got mad at me because I disrespected the church and the priest...

Not only did Carmen have to face the priest and relive the distressing events of her previous encounters with him, but she felt the 'trauma-wound' open even further because of her husband's admonishment; it appeared to Carmen that her husband had sided with the priest when her husband told her how disrespectful she had been.

For many years, Elizabeth kept her traumatic secrets close. When it came time to disclose personal information requisite to acquire financial redress from the Canadian government, all the traumatic memories came flooding back. Elizabeth remembered that during the cultural and spiritual indoctrination into white society, she and her childhood companions were told, among other lies, that their families who participate in Sundance were of the devil and would be going to hell:

they'd take us into classrooms and I, I remember the, the biggest thing that that I remember to this day that stuck with me was what they told us about our people when they said that the people that go to the Sundance are going there to adore the devil and that it's devil worship and if any of us are caught over there in the summer time we're going to get ah excommu, everybody knew that work, excommunicated, and everybody was scared of it including the old people, everybody was, everybody it was the most horrible word that anybody could say...

Elizabeth was confused:

and so I used to think how could, how could my grandfather be a devil worshipper,

because he's the kindest person around and I used to think he's way kinder than these nuns, and these nuns are saying that they, they, they connect with God, and that these old people connect with the devil...these guys are always ready to give you a good licking or punishment, scare you and all this...

One of Elizabeth's traumatic wounds was re-opened during the period of time when she had been communicating with a friend as together they tried to fill in the government application papers for financial redress. It was easier for Elizabeth to recall such things with a friend present because the friend could ask, the 'remember when' questions as Elizabeth had blocked out the most traumatic events in order to survive. Elizabeth had been abused sexually, physically, psychologically and spiritually during her time spent in residential school and with the help of her friend, she was able to recall an event of abuse:

I was visiting with another friend of mine and she told me, 'do you remember that time when that nun threw you down the stairs and you fell all the way down onto that cement and you were just laying there', she said, 'and we were all looking at you, we thought you were dead' and only when she said it, I remembered it, oh yeah, I remember opening my eyes and then seeing all those girls looking it was like their faces this way, but I wasn't even remembering it and then when it came to sex abuse well my, some of my friends too, I don't think they really know what sex abuse is... they know what rape is but anything else, sexual harassment, I don't think they really and I didn't...

Elizabeth's traumas were parallel to Carmen's as Elizabeth experienced similar sexual abuse at the hands of a priest. Elizabeth recalled not knowing what sex abuse really was

but was provided with a clear understanding after commenting about events to a lawyer.

With regard to having knowledge about sex abuse Elizabeth stated:

I didn't because the priest one day, he squeezed my breast and I didn't I didn't um I didn't like it I didn't but then when the lawyer started to talk to me, and I remembered that and I told him, I told him well this happened to me but I don't know if it's in that category and he said, 'yes it is' and he started to question me about it further....

As a result of abusive treatment, vast numbers of First Nations people live with historic trauma on a daily basis; their relatives endured a lifetime of punishments far in advance of puberty during their time spent at residential school. Many First Nations survivors experience four supplementary components of trauma which include grief, guilt, shame and anger. These components are equally to blame for the non-stop reinforcement of that trauma.

Overwhelming Grief

Grief signifies intense sorrow; personal losses generate grief and can include loss of personal possessions, self-esteem, spirituality, language, human life/physical death and of course soul death. The majority of First Nations people suffered spiritual death. Internal defeat was devastating as it created a void in their souls with little possibility of closure.

Speaking to grieving his loss of language, for example, Eddie remarked:

Ah today we're trying to teach our kids Blackfoot, eh, but ah it's, it's the, it's the meaning behind all they you know words that are spoken eh that ah, so that loss of language has a lot to do with it, teaching our children values, ah I guess, ah I, I, I ah haven't passed down any of my a stories from what I heard from as a child eh. Even

though they've been translated, you know, I, I can't tell them to my kids you know because the way I heard them eh, as a child, you could, say like you could go into Disneyland and fantasize about those things as a child eh ...you know it loses that meaning eh....

Eddie's multi-faceted feelings of grief arise from internalized personal trauma to external sorrow for the people in his community whom he works with at a professionally therapeutic intensity. Eddie explained:

I drank for five years straight every day. I, I suffered a trauma that ah, that brought me down to you know brought me down to you know rock bottom. My nephew shot himself right in front of me. And like you know all the traumas that you experience, you go through, ah your mind makes itself up what it wants to do with that trauma and for me my mind was set, ah I said, "I wanna drink, forget about it instead of talking about it and I had several chances to talk about it, but, R. the R, the RCMP officer that took me in through you know for suicide watch gave me his card and when I walked out I threw it away and I always regret that but of course I didn't understand it at the time ...

While Eddie expressed his anguish at the loss of his nephew, he composed himself and spoke about how saddened he is at the loss of his language, and his sacred culture. Eddie also expressed sorrow and grief at how dependent he feels the community members are and blames their personal lack of community pride on their dependencies:

in the way I ah try and work with the community and I see all that, I see all that ah dependency that has been created by the government, the dependency on social services, people expecting things to be done for them...they're, they're , they're

helpless you know they're like little children you know. They're like that, you know, the, the people today, ah we, we tried to do a program where you clean up the whole community, spring cleanup and some of them didn't even come out and you know and um I was driving along and I had a truck load of ah garbage and I stopped by when this individual I know on the sidewalk and there was a Christmas tree laying on the ground and I, I rolled down my window and told him, "can you throw that in" and he said, "how much are you going to pay me?" and right there I got defensive, ah I thought 'hey, this is your community, you know, why, why do you want to be paid?' but you know, it's that dependency – the need for the next drink eh...

Eddie sensed the grip that residential school's intergenerational impact has had on First Nations people. He reported that by working through his personal grief he is better able to be a role model to his own younger children as well as his grown up children. Speaking out about his losses became therapeutic for Eddie; he is a living example to others that getting beyond denial can aid in healing.

Gelayne grieves through a healthy process of mourning the death of her mother two years ago. Gelayne said that at one time in their relationship they were co-addicted and co-dependent but that:

I mean um we couldn't have been any more closer um so she was the only one I truly trusted, she could have told me anything and I would have believed her but she didn't, that's one thing I'm thankful, she didn't abuse that power um she always, always talked to us kids and always used herself as example and I just felt one, I just felt a need to at least try one day try and make you know some type of um life for my mom, a good life you know, where someone could take care of her...

Gelayne's tears demonstrated her continuing grief about her mother's fairly recent death. As central to her grief as the death of her mother is, Gelayne, not unlike the other co-researchers, declared grief about the losses of her language, culture and spirituality and she lamented about the betrayal she learned to own from those who purportedly were looking after her. Gelayne expressed her grief through a personal lens of hate:

I hated them, you know I hated their God like their God is such a punishing God I just couldn't understand, they talk about love and, and ah kindness and that but that's not what I went through, in fact the kindness came from total strangers, and I just never understood why then they always talked about love and yet always seen this um the cruel side of it, the harshness, the coldness...

Loss of their language, culture, tradition, and spirituality resonated loudly with Carmen, Starr and Elizabeth. Carmen knows her attempts to heal the grief of the residential school experiences are coming to fruition. Her husband has taught her their traditional language and she has earned the right to become a spiritual leader and medicine woman, holding sweat lodges and ceremonies. Elizabeth and Starr continue to shed the grief of residential school losses by learning their language and seeking spiritual guidance from traditionalists. Elizabeth stated clearly:

I am a pipe carrier and I have and I, I'm a sweat lodge, I carry the pipe in the sweat Lodge and I go many different places and I consider that a blessing and a healing rather than a job...anyway, I worked with this guy and he heals a lot with DNA and spirituality; his pipe has ah like a thing around like that from the DNA...and he talks about, he gets into DNA without even planning, it starts, it just comes in somehow and he was talking about that, he was saying it's in your DNA that your grandfathers

back, the pain that they went through, it's in you and he said it manifests itself and it becomes part of your cellular structure which of course becomes your DNA...well, Christianity talks a lot about demons and devils and all this and I think those are the demons and the devils they just kind of personified them but it's that, it's, it's the illnesses and the sicknesses and the pain and all these things that have been that have ah not healed and that stay with us...

One would conclude from this that First Nations people live with historic grief no differently than with historic trauma. Trauma and grief have a connection in the lives of residential school survivors. The trauma experienced at residential school has become toxic for many First Nations people and this coupled with the losses of culture, traditions, and spirituality is manifested in toxic grief. Intergenerationally, numerous First Nations citizens have suppressed emotions and have attempted to move forward with their lives; for the majority of the First Nations populace there has been little or no success for them advancing. Residential school survivors continue to carry feelings of having done something wrong or having failed in an obligation and their perceived culpability manifests itself in their daily lives.

Plagued by Guilt and Shame

Eddie, Carmen, Gelayne, Starr, and Elizabeth all expressed how guilt has ravaged their spirits and in some cases how it continues to do so. While discussing the feelings of guilt he had brought from residential school into his adult life, Eddie's analogy evoked an unforgettable reminder:

so ah, you've got to learn to deal with it, you got to learn to talk about the hurts, you have to learn to quit being ashamed of 'em and bring 'em out in the open eh, so ah,

you have to take that shirt of guilt off and you know throw it in the laundry, put a lot of Tide, but you know you gotta get it cleaned eh...

The 'shirt of guilt' has been shed by Eddie and he claims a healthy readiness to move forward and help others. Carmen knows how guilt has affected her life and her 'shirt of guilt' has not been wholly removed:

I feel really sorry for my husband, I, I feel really badly you know I even though he's older than me by 15 years I really feel bad for him because he's so badly damaged and he's so scared of Hell and, and he still did not take his power back to a complete degree...he's so fearful and, and he and you know I feel so I feel like I betrayed him because he walks alone in that church now and um I feel like maybe I should swallow my stupid pride and go back to church and sit with him then I keep thinking, 'no. that priests gets a hard on too and I can't be there no more, I just can't be, and then I felt sorry for him because he walks all alone in his Catholic journey ...

Burdened with feelings of guilt Carmen is still convinced that on one hand she has betrayed her husband yet believes on the other hand that it was the church which created the betrayal and animosity she and her husband share. After a very brief pause in the conversation Carmen picked up the conversation and stated:

I, I guarantee you that any survivor lives with guilt and lives with that underlying fear God's going to get us for even talking the way we do and [speaking directly to me] right after you leave, boy I'm going to really pray, I'll put this tobacco, I'll say, 'God, don't get me, because you know I'm going to go to Hell' and so when I say that, you can still see still this Catholicism still is coming at me, oh yeah and it just won't let go you know and yet on the other side if there was a sweat lodge I would just go crawl in

there and I would just say, 'God forgive me, I, I think I might have said something bad today' but, you know, that's guilt.

Gelayne's closeness to her feelings of guilt was not as detached as those expressed by Carmen. Gelayne suffered guilt while attending residential school and she has to deal with it to this day. Gelayne recounted that one of the times she and her brothers and sisters spoke about the time frame in which they were in residential school:

but ah talking with my brothers and sisters they said that we were there much earlier I guess and I didn't remember, I don't know if I blocked it out but I don't remember as I always had my brothers and sisters around and they're the ones that took care of me um that with that second time with me being the older one and my younger sister that um I really felt guilty, um I felt so accountable for things I didn't even do but yet I was I was purposely saying it was me so I wouldn't see everyone get beat and um but it followed me so it just seemed like the harder they were on me, the harder I became inside.

Gelayne spoke about the sexual abuse that went on in residential school and she described how she turned a blind eye to what was happening the best she could as a child:

but the other things that went on, sexual wise, um, I, I never did encounter that for anyone to ever try anything on me because I would fight, I, I'm the type that will fight and scream and I don't care and I think if the nuns and priests tried that on me I would have fought and screamed too....I think um when I think back to it, residential school, the things that I did see that were sexual um I closed my eyes to it, I didn't want to think about it, I was just so thankful that it wasn't me that was being molested at that time...and it's like you feel almost guilty for even thinking you're glad it's not you

and, and, and you know because ah like I said I've always felt that I'm the one to rescue, and when I closed my eyes to it, it just felt like I had um given up on them not helped them and I was being very selfish.

Guilt pervaded Gelayne's life during her residential school years and she carried that with her into her adulthood. Although recounting painful events, Gelayne was candid; she opened up, willing to continue sharing her feelings which she had kept suppressed for numerous years until now:

yeah, a hard core criminal to the point where it just felt like I had no feelings but the feelings were all inside me, I felt them, I felt shame, I felt guilt, I felt sorryness but I never did express them, I just kept them in here and ah played a really, really, REALLY tough role....

The tough role Gelayne spoke about was used to cover up her feelings of hurt and guilt for all the things perpetrated upon her at the hands of the priests, nuns and other girls at residential school. She is still emotionally sensitive and as she spoke about the guilt she feels, her tears fell without much provocation from the words she spoke. At one point Gelayne was asked to share how her guilt affects her today. She stated:

I know that um it sure is a lot better than before like how I would live with that continuous um guilt on my conscience, continuous guilt for how I acted when I was young like when I was young, thinking it was my fault everything I did, was naturally bad, there's no hope for me, I actually for many years I accepted the fact that um jail was my way of life because I knew I was a very violent person and that ah that was the safest place for me was to be in there...

Even for Gelayne to accept help from outside her traditional community burdened her with guilt:

when I first went there it felt, it really felt like I was betraying my culture....I started talking about it and yet that always followed me even in today like constantly talking about residential school....

Guilt and shame also pervaded Starr's life for a long time and she explained:

um with the with the shame of residential school with the shame that that brought the, the thing that keeps us in our shame is the guilt – the total, total guilt and I am sure my auntie and my mom felt so much guilt that you know every time she that probably came to surface you know she just went out and got drunk and just stayed drunk and so while you, we are dealing with the shame we need also deal with that guilt and that is as debilitating because it's not coming from somebody else, it's coming from you, it's coming you know, you 're the one that's telling yourself that you're a bad person that you're you know um, so people just stay in denial ... and you can tell people, you can tell people that you have you know you have nothing to feel guilty about you know bit that means nothing, that means ABSOLUTELY NOTHING and it's not until we start to make peace with that and, and I still, when I talk about my kids growing up and I still cry because I still have that you know I still have that guilt ... and it, it's you know it's like a roller coaster, hey, and some days I'm a lot stronger and you might feel a lot stronger and I can talk about it and be ok and then there's days when you just feel really vulnerable and raw and emotional and if I if it comes up and then you know but the thing that I've learned is if I do that, and if I break down and if I cry it's ok ...

It soon became evident that not only guilt and grief have permeated the lives of the five co-researchers. Shame and anger are two overpowering residual emotions from residential school which continue to haunt many First Nations people. These two emotions have made life outside residential school difficult for Eddie, Carmen, Gelayne, Starr, and Elizabeth to endure.

During dialogue with Starr, she made it clear that although she did not personally attend residential school, the teachings of her guardian aunt were reflected in Starr's personal life. Starr vowed to stop the cycle of shame and anger that she struggles with to this day. She asserted that she was going to pass along to her children a legacy of change and that they were going to be raised differently than she had been. During her expression of personal feelings attached to her own upbringing, Starr became emotional and began to weep. Through her tears of admitted sorrow and shame, Starr recalled:

but a lot of um Native women when we sit in, in a circle and we talk about being teenagers and when you're um starting changing from you know to being a woman none of us had a positive experience and we um like I know that directed to the residential school because my auntie probably had a very negative experience and then my mom you know and then they just passed down to us ... and it, it's really odd because it gives you a feeling of just this overwhelming shame...

Starr recalled:

and it's and I remember that because my oldest daughter when I, I was started on this healing journey and I thought I'm going to be a different parent, I just wanted to be a different parent and, I, I remember just gathering all the courage because I felt this overwhelming shame but I just gathered as much courage as I could to tell her to

explain to her that her body is going to change and, and when that happens that I want her to come to me and that was SO HARD to do because I was SO ASHAMED...

Still distressed and continuing to weep Starr explained:

and I remember afterward and I was going, replaying it in my mind wondering if, if she could hear it in my voice, if she could see it on my face, if she could read it in my body language and I was so ashamed of it and because I didn't want to pass that to her because I had already started to understand how things were, are, are passed on and how patterns are created and, and I didn't want that to happen to her...

For Eddie, cultural shame played a huge role in his young life, shame that has followed him into his adulthood. As a small child living at home with his parents Eddie explained that he was not forced to wear clothing all the time and was permitted to run around naked at home. Once within the walls of the residential school all the natural things Eddie had been used to changed:

I'm no longer in denial, I ah, see what holds it back is the shame, it's the same, the personal shame...like I said at the beginning, when I was a child I would run around naked and there was no shame in that and so immediately when I went to the school they instilled that guilt about being naked, eh, so the shame started there and because they wanted to Christianize us they began to teach us that our culture was the work of the devil eh and so we were, that started the cultural shame and we were also taught that our homes were dirty, our parents were dirty, so every time I got a chance to go home, I would clean up my whole house. I, I learned to clean up everything eh and ah I was ashamed of my parents because of the way they dressed, the way they spoke English, it's all those things eh, the same was instilled in us so you bring it you bring

it home eh....see that kind of shame you know, you, you get a shame start being ashamed of your parents we were ashamed of our parents because they spoke Blackfoot, we didn't see the advantage in it, eh so it's that kind of shame, it's cultural shame... I guess to a to a certain degree you know I was ah I was an apple Indian at one point in my life, red on the outside, yeah, I'd of liked to be a white, white person at one time....

Unrelenting Anger

Eddie continued beyond the aspect of shame and shared his feelings of anger. He stated that the residential school experience robbed him of his culture, the “greatest felony” inflicted on First Nations children which continues to anger Eddie today:

I started my journey at the age of 50, went back to school at the age of 50 and ah in the third year of university ah, that's when I got the awareness of what the residential school did to me, eh, so I that's when I started recognizing ah what I missed eh in life eh and today I, the anger surfaced again, today I'm still angry, I'm angry at the church, what it has taught me, eh, what it taught me and it took away, the residential school took away my culture, that was one of the worst things that it did to me eh....

Carmen still experiences a burden of what she alluded to as 'toxic anger'. This emotion originated from her residential school experiences as a child but anger followed her into adulthood due to a priest's sexually abusive behaviour. Carmen's anger became too much for her to bear alone. She reported having shared her story with her husband and revealed what had happened to her during the time when he had not been emotionally present in their marriage. Carmen expanded on the experiences she suffered when she

sought out help from their parish priest and as she shared her anger. She is still trying to come to grips with the events of that day:

we went to see Bishop Michael O'Malley and I remember there was three, two priests um one on each side of Bishop Michael O'Malley and he said to me, 'Carmen', he said, 'shame on you', he said, um 'do you want your kids to grow up in your shame?' he said, 'and then, med, in the media, radios and eve, a TV and in ah newspapers, magazines and then ah take your story, they're going to print your pictures' he says, and um 'your little boys are going to grow up to be men someday' he says' you want to grow up in your shame? Shame on you!' and so um and I told him, well, yeah but he did it, you know he did, he grabbed me and this and that; and then he says, ' well, give it to God, God will take care of it, 'he says, you know, he says but' I'm sorry' he said I must have done something, maybe I dressed provocative or you know he gave me reasons why I did this so anyways but my husband never said anything 'cause he kind of believed the Bishop that I must have done something anyways so um I never sued the church and I never said nothing about it but that, that has been my lever not to go back you know so I'm I am Catholic by baptism and ah you know everything else but I'm not Catholic in, in saying that I can go to church and I started now to, to question the doctination...

Carmen has had to live with her husband's anger as well as her own since encountering the Bishop yet she admits that, at times during her healing journey, her anger is not as apparent as it had been before. Carmen does, however, continue to reiterate that residential school laid the foundation for inhumane punishment and she remains angry about that.

Learning Manipulative Ways

One had to be sneaky in order to survive, the co-researchers reported. Elizabeth admitted to stealing food in residential school when she was hungry, in fact she said that she knows that it was in residential school where she learned to steal and cheat. Speaking about the nuns and priests she remarked:

these guys are always ready to give you a good licking or punishment, scare you and all this and we learned, we learned that we had, I think that's where I learned because I became a very deceitful person especially as an alcoholic and I think I learned there and I became deceitful to protect myself like I would a defense mechanism and lots of other kids today when I talk to them, they tell me the same thing, I had to cheat because I didn't want them to be mad at me so to protect myself I'd cheat or I'd lie, I'd lie to, to protect myself or I'd steal because I was hungry and then they'd turn around and they'd teach us to lie, to steal and all the things we were doing was sinful so we really got confused at we, we thought we, we'd we have to we're not supposed to do these things because they're sinful but on the other hand we have to do them for survival but we were kids and we couldn't ah rationalize like that so we just kind of, our lives became really, we just became really confused people...

Gelayne also stole food in residential school because she was hungry - the children were never provided with second helpings after a meal. Stealing became a method of survival for staving off hunger but the children would inevitably get caught. Gelayne remarked:

ah I remember many times that we'd be hungry upstairs because at the supper table

if you're still hungry they don't give you seconds, they just feed you bread and I don't, I didn't care for that much bread so when everyone was sleeping we would all sneak down and start stealing from the kitchens whatever we could grab, whatever we, we could get, we would take eh, and I, I remember the next day this one incident, the nun came in and she said that they found out that food was missing and that they know it was one of us girls and that we had to tell and no one was saying nothing, we were all just standing by our beds so the nun told us to put our hands out and she went to everyone and whipped our hands and um at that time ah, a way to show your strength was not to cry and I remember there was some girls who wouldn't cry and she would whip them be really whipping them and they still wouldn't cry and she would be getting more and more angry and that's one of the ways I learned how to hold my um whenever I wanted to cry I would hold it in and I got tough from that....

The nuns whipped children when they got caught trying to sustain their bodies by stealing additional food and even when they did not eat wormy porridge. Additional maltreatment was carried out if youngsters could not adjust emotionally to their new environment.

Spiritually Terrorized

A vast number of First Nations children grew up in fear while attending residential school – fear of punishment, fear of never seeing their family members again, fear of going to Hell, but by and large the greatest fear that was beaten into them was a paralyzing fear of God. This paralyzing fear of God was omnipresent throughout the shared dialogues. The church, implicated and not to be trusted, opposed all First Nations culture and religious practices. An attempt to effortlessly implement the approach toward

Christianizing First Nations people by compelling them to comply with the philosophy of the dominant Anglo-Catholic society was a huge task but the administration was up to the challenge.

Frozen Fear of God

As a small child, Carmen was led to believe that God was everywhere and could see everything, so it would be best if she obeyed the rules of the Catholic Church as prescribed by the teachings at residential school:

um what I was taught um in boarding school what that we were led to believe and we were led to believe that God was all over and he could see us through any wall and my God he could read your thoughts and, and so I totally um just surrendered myself to God and I thought, 'well, I'm going to be real good my whole life' and I think that my fear um served two purposes in that um ... I was a very good Christian... but as a result of boarding school I was led to believe that God was um you know He could see everything, almost read your mind and so I, I, I, I stayed um where I was at in my life believing that God is everywhere... I gave all my personal power to God...

Gelayne realized the consequences of the Catholic religion at residential school when she tried later in life to come to terms with her own cultural belief system. Frozen fear had taken its toll and:

it took me a long time to come to my culture and become fruitful with it because I really thought we were going to hell, I mean it, to think of smudging, to think of anything like that is like, 'oh, you're going to hell' you know, so for me that was really important...

Scaring the Hell into, rather than out of, children became daily common practice when Carmen attended residential school. Nuns were not compassionate nor nurturing towards the children and at age four, Carmen had no idea of who or what God was, especially this fearful Catholic God; she and her childhood companions literally had the fear of hell scared into them on a daily basis. After the children had come back from classes at school and had something to eat:

we'd go down the long hall way to some class and there's apparently some old military barracks that were brought in and they were converted into classrooms and then what Sister would do was she'd have those big long skeleton keys and then she would know which key to open and she would put us open in a, a door and all us little girls would go in that room under the steps and a reel, must have been eight by ten if not six by ten, it was such a small room um there was great big reels, you know old time reels where one would feed the other and then the minute she would turn it on it would just boom and you'd hear devils screaming and on the screen there'd be devils coming down off that screen, there'd be angels coming down and there'd be a big screen you'd be you'd be fighting, you'd see kids playing and then there was a war between the between the devil and, and the angels of heaven and God and, and then we heard, we leaned the Commandments in the room and it would be just booming in that room and it would just scare us, it would, it would just scare the hell into us instead of out of us and it was a conditioning process we went through - for the longest time I always remember and we would sit there and try to plug our ears with our fingers and Sister would hit our knuckles not to and she would make us listen to that um those kids screaming and all the people sliding into the fires of Hell and we

would hear them screaming and they told us um the Sisters in the course of the reels that um if we were condemned to death and if we were condemned into the fires of Hell and that we're never going to die we were going to burn forever, we're going to be tormented souls.

Then children, now adults, it was revealed that many First Nations people remain bewildered; they still do not know whether to fear God, fear Hell or fear both. Most First Nations children grasped the concept of fear of both God and Hell very quickly and hung onto one of the Catholic Church's doctrines of obedience. Internalized fear and the obedience principle flourish in the present-day lives of many 'trained' First Nations people who were subjected to such techniques of conditioning.

Obey or Go to Hell

Each co-researcher experienced the ultimatum prescribed by the nuns and priests at residential school. The threat became like a chanted mantra, "Obey or go to Hell!" and each child got the message. Eddie's foreign world issued forth threats of Hell if he or his companions failed to obey the rules in residential school; one of those rules said that if the boys did not go to confession they would not be able to receive communion and they would go to Hell. During our discussion Eddie laughed at the paradoxical thinking behind this rule:

so um there were a lot of hurts in school you know, you learned to lie, you learned to steal. Even the church taught us how to lie, that was the biggest thing, we ah they taught you to go to confession and when you have to, when you go to confession you have to you know you have to have sins but as children you know where the hell are you going to get all those sins from and you live in a closed environment ah so we had

to lie, you know we had to make up our own lies...you learn to ah lie because you know you can get away with it, the priest can't do anything about it so you lie to the priest. It's sort of a survival skill, eh, ok, in order for me to get communion, I have to go to confession but I have no lies, no, no, no sins to actually tell the priest so you make up, you make up sins that you've committed eh... yeah so kids learn to lie at a young age eh ...you try to learn the good but yet you, you also learn the evil, that's the paradox...

It seemed amusing to Eddie that children would have to invent sins in order to gain entry to the confessional, which in turn provided them blessing through communion. He does realize that it was not amusing because innocent children bought into the mantra of 'obey or go to Hell'; they knew they had to respond appropriately in order to prevent too harsh a punishment. The appropriate response was having a sin worthy of confession. There were many different kinds of sins to be forgiven for. Elizabeth believed that not only stealing, cheating and lying were sins but even thinking certain thoughts of sex would send her to Hell if she did not confess promptly. On the topic of sexual thoughts as sin, Elizabeth recalled:

they taught us not to talk about it, it was dirty and then it went further, a step further it was, it became part of religion, like I remember thinking one day, 'how are babies made?' and then I thought, "aahhh, now I have to go to confession, I've got, now I have a sin to tell the priest because I'm thinking bad thoughts, bad thoughts, is ah thinking like is that are bad thoughts, so Id' better not think like that because I'm making, I'm committing a sin so when I go see the priest at confession I'll have to tell him that I was thinking bad thoughts...

Starr mentioned that she experienced many of the lessons taught by the Catholic Church second hand from her aunt but she said, "I grew up with the belief that if I did anything wrong I was going to go to Hell".

Illuminating her awareness of Hell Carmen remarked:

as a result of boarding school I was um I attempted suicide and, an my husband rushed me in and, and the priest had gave me a good scolding and he told me that you know that I ah was going to go to Hell if I had succeeded in suicide that I'd be sure I'm going to go to Hell or call go to this place called Purgatory where there's troubled souls will I hope there is not place but I still fear that there may be a Purgatory and, and so I still fear that there may be a place called Hell... I totally learned to fear heaven and hell and God and, and all that stuff was when we were little girls at boarding school...

The little girls in residential school, Carmen explained, had to keep their arms outside the covers when they slept for fear of going to Hell:

Sister would always make sure our arms were all stuck out and then she would tuck in the last child and so she said that um we were dirty and um that we were going to sin if we touched ourselves, and we're not allowed to stick our hands between our legs to warm up or to curl into fetal position because she said we're gonna touch ourselves and it was dirty in our private spots....

Carmen elaborated further and told me that after tucking the little girls into bed, once the sister had left the room and closed the door to the dorm:

we would all be jumping into each others' beds trying to warm each others' rub our arms and stuff. And so this one girl names Susan we all jumped into her bed and

this girl here she start um, um poking in between our legs and anyway we didn't know what the heck was going on, it was the first time in my whole life I've been touched in my private spots and so and I don't know what she was doing up I knew cause the sister told us enough that if you touch us down there you're going to burn in Hell and I still am scared of Hell today and I still know where Susan touched me because she told me I was going to go to Hell and so Susan said that if I told anybody, that I'm going to go to Hell anyways because she touched my private spots and that was right in my vagina....

Loyalties to the church have taken a toll on the five co-researchers although today they are seeking their own personal paths to wholeness actively participating in reclamation of their essence. Remnants of historical trauma, encompassing cultural and traditional genocide and loss of language linger and ever-present ghosts of the past haunt them on a daily basis.

Religious Head Prayers but Visceral Disregard

In an unyielding attempt to Christianize First Nations children and to entrench them into the dominant culture they were immersed into the customs of the governing religion. First Nations people were forced to learn Latin, to sing and to serve in Catholic Church ceremonies all the while denying their own songs in their cultural ceremonies. During conversation with each co-researcher it became evident that they believe that there is a resurgence of the traditional beliefs and that a great many First Nations people are becoming more and more receptive to learning and understanding about historic culture, tradition, language, and spiritual practices.

Carmen was adamant about the love she feels for her Creator but how interspersed the Christian teachings are within that traditional service. She admits today as an adult that she has suffered an enormous disconnection throughout the times of indoctrination and now she recognizes the need to fill the hole in her spirit:

I know all these Latin songs and I don't even know what I'm singing you know, I mean ah they sure sound good but um....

As a child, however, Carmen said she did not even know who God was or why she had to sing or pray to him. She only knew that if she did not kneel and pray when she was told to that she would be punished by the sisters:

so we would get up and the minute we got up we get on our knees and we pray on that hardwood floor and I don't know who I prayed to but I sure learned the prayers good. I didn't know who God was, and I didn't know, I didn't, I knew nothing you know....

Attending church, saying prayers, going to catechism, attending school and a set amount of time for playing was all in the 'normal' day for Eddie. He expressed feelings of loss and terrible neglect wherein:

what I couldn't understand about it was they, they taught us you know a different language including Latin, eh...while I was in school I prayed a lot from my head, eh, it was more memorization than praying from your heart, eh...so today ah I ah can understand you know Christmas songs that are sung in Latin. I know it, what the words are but I don't fully understand the meaning of it.

As an adult in his fifties Eddie realized that he too needed to fill the spiritual gap and during a moment of distress he instinctively communicated with his Creator, "...and that was the first time I ever prayed you know from my heart ..."

Fears and uncertainties impelled Eddie, Carmen, Gelayne and Elizabeth to obey the rules at residential school; they were forced to follow direction of the dominant society and in doing so they became disconnected and lost to deep self. The church had imprinted its doctrinism in their minds, bodies and souls.

Hating One's Own Branded Soul

Residential school taught each one of these individuals to hate themselves, to feel discriminated against and to become unable to function in mainstream society. The intergenerational aspect of residential school was evident in its impact on Starr; even though Starr had not attended residential school, the aunt who raised her had attended, therefore all the teachings, the discrimination and the hate was present:

I grew up in the 60s so they were already shutting down the residential schools and they were, they were um starting to bus Indian kids ah to the nearby towns so I was in that era, so the Integration Era, so that was really a traumatic experience because even though I'm really fair, they, they still knew that I was an Indian, they still knew that I came from the Rez and I was still, I still, um you know there was still a lot of racism...and you're a little kid, ah, it taught me to hate myself, it taught me to want to be somebody else, it taught me to I, I grew up with a lot of shame, I hated everything associated to being Indian. I hated the reserve, I hated just, I hated everything and pretending to be, WANTING to be somebody different and just the I guess the way we had where we grew up and with my friends, what we were all kind of

experiencing the same kind of thing but nobody said it because we didn't have words for it, but 'that emptiness.' And the thing that we did was um we, we sniffed a lot, we started to sniff....

Gelayne said that her body became the target of her hatred and self-loathing.

Experiencing hatred of her self, the person she had become, Gelayne expressed:

I was really ashamed of my body for many years, I hated myself um couldn't stand to look at myself, um the only time I had any confidence is when I was drunk, I'd have to be drunk to go out and continuously stoned but more so drunk and then I felt so, I, I felt at home with myself, I could do anything so I know from an early age that um I was very ashamed about my body and, and then the fact when everyone else was getting boyfriends and that....

These experiences exacerbated the feelings of guilt and shame that Gelayne has carried yet it was almost impossible for her to alleviate the self-owned hatred. The residential school authorities imparted destructive covert messages as well as overt ones as a means of instilling personally bigoted messages in the minds of the five co-researchers.

The sexual abuses perpetrated upon Carmen as a child and again as an adult became the springboard for her self-loathing. As a direct result of residential school abuses Carmen 'witnessed' her crude personal hatred:

I was abused like I said it was at school that girl poked me and she, she made me realize there's part of my body that I didn't know existed and then again too, um there's that priest and, and like I, I tried to commit suicide after that priest did that to me. I just, it was unforgivable for me, it's just and I thought you know I was, I was dirty, and, and, and I would look in a mirror and I would just punch myself, just right,

I would beat myself up, I would look in the mirror and I would say, ‘oooooh, I hate you!!’ and I would just punch myself and I would just grab my skin and I would be trying to peel it off and I was just you know and I would just jerk my hair back and I was, I was actually physically beating myself up because I thought I did something I could never figure out what I, why I caused that priest to do that to me....

Ill equipped to enter the dominant society, still internalizing the hatred, suffering the loss of spirituality and burdened with a lack of self-esteem, the majority of residential school survivors were tossed back into the social order. Their internal locus of control were nearly non-existent however it was deemed that these First Nations people had to cope within the boundaries set aside specifically for them.

Crashed and Burned: The Treacherous Transition

Most children are raised with loving parents who provide the foundation for a balanced future. Nurturing was never provided to First Nations children who attended residential school. There were no loving parents, no provisions for a healthy balanced future, no design for living that these children could take with them into the world. The First Nations children in residential school were damaged from the very beginning. They were taught only enough to get by and even at that, they were mostly self-taught at survival skills.

Survival Skills

The survival skills used within the residential school, those which taught them to steal, cheat, and lie, served them well in mainstream society for a while but not for the long term. Addiction, time in prison and local jail, emotional damage, and violence all became measures by which residential school survivors became known. To this day Gelayne

finds it very difficult to control her anger and mentioned that she has landed in jail many times for violent behaviour towards others. When addressing her volatility Gelayne recalled an incident wherein she had been interrogated by a young male police officer.

She stated:

when I went in that room that young cop he started talking to me, he made a lot of sense, he said I'm like a cup of water and everything that happens to me is like a drip in the cup and it gets to the point where it just ah, overflows and I, and I and I it just connected so well with me because that's how I felt, like things would get so overwhelming and then I just blow up and I'm really sorry when I blow up and then I'm alright again, so I knew that that was a learned behaviour, I knew I had to deal with it and find out why and um I can all say it goes back to residential school um even how my brothers treated me, today I realize that they were products of residential school that that's what they were taught in their um when they were going that they had to be really mean and abusive to the younger ones or they would be in trouble and um everything always went back to residential school...

Gelayne still struggles with having a place in the criminal justice system, attending court and answering to charges stemming from violent actions which came to light in this context:

I think um this last time that I got out from prison was I had just gotten five years um and I know I stabbed, I've been charged three times with attempted murder, um first time second degree and three times after that attempted and ah the last couple of times was actually involving police officers so I was getting more and more violent and um to a point where I just didn't matter, a but it I could feel authority figures

the most that I always had a problem on that I seem to explode

Speaking freely, Gelayne mentioned how her life has been clouded with verbal and physical abuse, alcoholism, and repeated trips to jail. She remembers the chants of 'going to Hell' and attached them specifically to criminal activities:

I always had that fear, 'going to Hell', 'going to Hell', 'going to Hell' and so that just confirmed it, 'oh I'm going to Hell and so if I'm going to Hell then I'm I better be, in my head, I wanted to be the best criminal there was and the most feared because we had the most respect in there and they got you know up once they got that respect it's like you can get anything there but I don't know I always felt like I always wanted to be somebody but I never was, I, and I could never function in normal society at all, I just couldn't, it was so hard and every time I would try, I'd dry and get sober, maybe go, start going to school, upgrading, a taking a journeyman course, carpentry, painting, the minute I would almost succeed, I'd be a month away from graduating, and I'd purposely go out drinking, next thing I'd wake up in the cells again 'oh, oh now I'm comfortable again' so I never really believed that I that was to succeed in this world, I always believed that I would be the criminal person and doing criminal things...

Alcoholism and substance abuse trouble Gelayne, Eddie, Starr and Elizabeth. Each one spoke of the grasp alcohol and drugs have had on their lives starting from a very early age. Each co-researcher stated that the impact residential school had in their lives was the impetus for them to abuse alcohol and other drugs. These substances were used to cover up emotions, to hide behind, to act as 'liquid courage' and in each case addiction to alcohol and other drugs ensued.

Colliding with Addiction

Eddie noted that he began to abuse alcohol at a very early age while still in residential school and that it took him down a road of tragedy. He used alcohol to cover up the memories of traumatic events in his life as well as to simply survive on a daily basis. Eddie remarkably sobered up when he was 50 years old but prior to that he stated:

I drank for five years straight every day....I suffered a trauma that ah, that brought me down to you know brought me down to you know rock bottom....ah your mind makes itself up what it wants to do with that trauma and for me my mind was set, ah I said, 'I wanna drink, forget about it instead of talking about it'...so what my mind said you know, it happened, I drank for the next five years and people wondered why I was drinking eh. I didn't know why I was drinking until and I guess my, my road to recovery turned, turned around the day I asked the Creator for help...but all those things that prior to that happening were residential school things. I ah, even though I could function you know outside, eh, outside in the environment, I couldn't, my life was always torn apart, torn apart by alcohol because of the, the emotions that were missing eh...

Eddie's quantum change led to the awareness that by talking to others about his alcohol abuse problems and the root cause of those problems, he would be able to guide them onto their own personal path to recovery. That is what Eddie does today.

Starr stated that she realizes that the issues of shame and discrimination that she faced in her life have been guiding factors in her abuse of alcohol and other drugs:

and the thing that we did was um we, we sniffed a lot, we started to sniff because it's cheap it's easy to get ...and um and that was just you know every day that was

something we did every day, started running away from school, didn't want to go to school and eventually dropped out and um then sniffing kind of um., people started to look down on us because we were sniffing and that was uncool so then we got into alcohol, more alcohol and more the, the different kinds of drugs and the I was I was ah, I quit sniffing when I was 16 but I, I and I still remember the last time I sniffed and I just went into alcohol, I, I took some acid when I was 14 and I was still sniffing at the time but I chose to just s, to continue sniffing but when I turned 16 I did a lot more acid and different kinds of drugs and drank, drank a lot and just staying numb...

Now on an unyielding healing journey Starr remarked:

I really needed to look at was the shame because it's so easy to, to just you know grab a bottle of beer if it gets too emotional and then you don't have that any more ...

Elizabeth had spoken earlier about how she had to learn to cheat and steal as a child in residential school in order to survive. Those skills were utilized later in life when she lived on the street as a homeless alcoholic. She remarked that at residential school:

I think that's where I learned because I became a very deceitful person especially as an alcoholic and I think I learned there and I became deceitful to protect myself like I would a defense mechanism.

On a personal note, the co-researchers' connections of residential school abuses to addictions, homelessness, and dysfunctional lives left no room for any doubts. Each in their own way, these individuals are examples of the ability to survive; they have each connected the relationship between residential school abuses and current abuses within many First Nations families.

Residential School Remnants and Ever-present Ghosts of the Past

It is not difficult to believe that the behaviours of some First Nations people are directly related to residential school abuses. Elizabeth was very forthcoming when she stated:

I've got three beautiful sons, but my husband was just horrible, he used to just beat me, I broke my jaw, broke my ribs, he was a residential school an and he was a really...one time at the reserve they had a big they were having a big party for this Sister Mary, she was going away, she was the last, the last of all the nuns and they were having this big ah this big thing and one of the guys stood up and he said, 'Sister Mary, you're leaving now and you're leaving the reserve with a whole bunch of wife beaters, you made us into wife beaters and now you're going away and nobody talked and he was joking, it was supposed to be a joke but nobody laughed because I think that's exa, that's exactly what it is because with my own family, I have seven brothers and three were like my age, two older and one younger and then there's a big drop to my next brother and then I have three more I have four brothers and three, three older ones and these three went to boarding school, these three beat the living tar out of their wives and many times I'd have to jump in between and stop them

Elizabeth continued:

and a couple of times I got punched too mistakenly punched because I went and put my face where it shouldn't have been it was at the wrong time and then these, these here that never went to boarding school, these four I don't think they've I've never heard of them to ever hit their wives and we're all raised in the same family, but those three ...

Gelayne also spoke of the way her brothers treated her and her sisters linking the residential school abuses her brothers endured to their home-style methods of punishment:

I ah played a really, really, REALLY tough role because I guess um when I would go home in the summers my brothers were there and they were in residential school and they, they were extremely abusive not just sexual but physical and mental; they would ah beat us girls up if the house wasn't clean, it had to be spotless, like SPOTLESS, and we're little girls trying to clean up this house, we, we don't do a good job so naturally we would get beat up all day.

Gelayne continued:

I remember this one time that my brother was beating me up so bad, I was so scared, I was trying to mop the fl, the floor and when I put the mop in the pail, I don't know what I did wrong and I spilled the whole pail over and he beat me up so bad that I, that I peed in my pants; he wouldn't even let me clean up until I cleaned up the floor then I could go clean myself up and ever since then I always have problem with washrooms, I always need to go to the washroom...

Carmen's ever-present ghosts from the past still pervade her consciousness. Although she never claimed any addictions Carmen claimed the same indoctrination each of the other co-researchers claimed. She expressed how effective that had been for her even to this point:

and I made sure and I abused my kids making sure that they fixed the beds the way I was taught, sharp corners and nice tight fitting bedding you know...and so um I taught my boys at a very young age to vacuum, to do dishes, to sweep floors, you

know, even how to do laundry and it's just because that was expected of us in boarding school, you know, and, and so there was no nurturing...

Compounding the trauma experienced by Carmen in the residential school, her deepening 'soul wound' was exacerbated by her mother's residential school experiences:

um my mom said when she went to boarding school herself she too was learned, ah she was taught how to be clean and so my mother would make us girls go out in the winter you know it was snowing and we would wash windows inside and out every Saturday and we would scrub the floors every Saturday and then my mom would make us girls clean the corners with toothbrushes you know, and so um and we scrubbed clothes, we ironed, just the way she was taught in school was how my mother taught us...

As each pertinent detail of intimately experienced traumatic childhoods leading to dysfunctional lifestyles was expressed, the awareness of the immense psychological burdens Eddie, Carmen, Gelayne, Starr, and Elizabeth experienced became apparent. It is not sufficient to simply mention that each one of these individuals is seeking spiritual wholeness; Starr quite expressively stated, "...an elder once said that the longest journey is from your head to your heart..." and indeed the journey towards wholeness of essence for these First Nations people will be fraught with physical and emotional pain. Enduring the process and releasing the crystallized emotions will present a new point of reference from which each individual may continue to heal.

Embracing the Spiritual Healing Journey

The medicine is already within the pain and suffering

You just have to look deeply and quietly

Then you realize it has been there the whole time

(saying from Native American Oral Tradition)

“Branded souls”, as Elizabeth calls them, are searching for spiritual healing, for the connection to the spirit, and to be one with all the elements of the earth. That aligns with the traditional teachings of First Nations people. According to the First Nations belief, in order to achieve that dimension one must deal with the psychological self, the emotional self, the spiritual self and the physical self; that is the essence of holistic healing and is practiced in sweat lodge, Powwow and Medicine Wheel.

Aftermath: Healing and Re-spiraling

The aftermath of residential school has taken a severe toll on First Nations people who survived the demeaning experiences. When Elizabeth was asked to elaborate explicitly on her personal experiences of living in the aftermath of residential school, she stated:

it's ah, it's when I get into that, when I go, go back into that, it's kind of like I have to regress and it, it's really, really, it's depressing and I don't like to get into it too much unless I'm working with somebody like you, you see a positive light at the end of the tunnel when I'm trying to bring this person over there, but if I just dealt with it on a one to one is not a beautiful story and I don't really like to regress there because ah it's it was so ah it was devastating to not only, not only my, my person but my spirit...

The story of residential school aftermath is a demoralizing narrative but it is one that must be told in order to support those individuals who are in a constant state of flux, wondering where they fit into the grand scheme of life. Many First Nations people have gone astray from their foundational teachings because of the residential school experiences, either their own experiences or those of a family member, including elders. Elizabeth clarified a very interesting point with regard to where elders are incorporated:

on that, on the Medicine Wheel there's a line that goes in the middle in the four and they use to correlate with the elders but if you have elders that are not elders, they might be OLD but they don't have the wisdom and the all the stuff, how could they collect, connect with these, that's what I see right now... Alan Black one day, we were so, we were doing social work together and we had a conference, and you know Alan, and he ah that was a long time ago, about over 30 years ago, he was just a young man then and he was saying um he was, the instructor was up doing talking and he was saying you've got to respect your elders and that's what they were talking about and Alan said, he said, you know, 'don't press that too deep', he said, 'because some of our elders today they're still juvenile delinquents' and all I remembered that, what he said, he said 'they never passed that', he said, 'they got stuck in there'...yeah he said, 'it has to be in balance, you've got to remember that this bal, that this wheel has to be in balance at all times'....

Elizabeth continued:

and these people are, are wise and full of wisdom and knowledge because they walked the path but if they didn't if they were just drunk and in the boarding school or following the, the route of the boarding school, they never, then never, they never

went to the mountains like us they never came up with nature, then never had the connection with nature, they don't even know it...

Carmen's experiences of living in the aftermath of residential school come with a heavy price. At times she experiences the feelings of survivor's remorse, carrying feelings of guilt for surviving the assault of the residential school teachings; it is very difficult it is for Carmen to seek her traditional spiritual path when she lives in a family where the Catholic Church's doctrines continue to be unfaltering. Carmen's husband attempts to be traditional but is a staunch Catholic as well, so Carmen feels beleaguered nearly all of the time:

Catholicism just, it just bombards us from both directions and here we are trying to be survivors, now we're trying to but, I, I guarantee you that any survivor lives with guilt and lives with that underlying fear God's going to get us for even talking the way we do...

Holistic Healing: Embracing the Traditional

Eddie is on a journey of healing and feels certain that he is learning to become fully human. His path to holistic healing began when he attained sobriety at age 50 and over a period of time realized what residential school had done to him:

I'm just recognizing some of the things that I do you know as a result of the boarding school, there's ah, there's a lot of things that have impacted my life because of that...

When asked what steps he has taken to begin his healing process, Eddie said:

Ahhh...well I think ah the first step was ah learning to ask for help, to start loving yourself. I, I, I don't think I ever loved myself, to start doing things for myself. All my life I've been doing things for other people...that's one of the things that truly was

learning how to pray and asking for forgiveness I started to love myself mostly...Ah, as an individual people say I'm a very kind person, eh, friendly person, ah but in reality I was very you know mean, eh because I, I didn't have any love eh...but my road to recovery is ah, ah, talking about ah those issues... talking about the abandonment issues, the shame, beginning to understand yourself, you know, your family, your history, the history of your family...

Eddie is grateful for what he has today:

Every day when I wake up, I, I, I thank the Creator for giving me that chance to wake up again, to appreciate the beauty and that's been, you know, you know as people we never look at the beauty around us eh, the sun you know coming up in the morning and especially when I come to work you know over this hill I see the mountains and ah that part of the morning when the sun is shining off them and so I thank the Creator for all the things he has given us, for giving me my health for all those things that, for keeping me sober, so ah I, I pray a lot in my own words eh in my own language and it makes a lot more, it has a lot more meaning for me than saying the rosary which was ah I you know today I hate that.

Looking at all the issues from a holistic point of view, Elizabeth also shared:

I truly believe speaking from experience with myself and from my family you have to look at all these issues from a holistic point, you even have to divide it, you've got to deal with your mind, you've got to deal with your emotional self, you've got to deal with the spirit and you've got to deal with your body because I've seen people deal with, with um problems and not deal wholly complete and they, they fall back, fall back into it whatever it is, if it's alcohol or depression, yeah it has to be on a holistic

level and like we were talking about the demons, you have to fight those, you HAVE to learn to fight those.

During conversation pertinent to her healing in a holistic manner, Elizabeth spoke of the beauty of nature just as Eddie had done:

I fast, sometimes I'd wake up and I'd fast half the day, from the time the morning start's till the sun's up here...and just and do it all different kind of ways some, some I do right in my house, sometimes those are the hardest ones because you smell the food, yeah, and then some I'd go way out into the mountains and it'd be cold and you're there by yourself but there's a beauty to it, there's really a beauty to it especially when nature came upon you and you're able to ah like connect, communicate with it or you became a living thing with it, come to you and, ah that's just so beautiful...

Starr's recognition of the need for holistic healing is shared with her partner and her children. She shared:

I yeah, yeah, I you know, I don't know what it is but every, every morning before we'd leave to school my partner and I, we'd smudge and pray and my prayer was always to open my mind and open my heart and keep my feet planted firmly on the earth and I'll always remember where I came from and I still say that every day because I don't want to forget, I don't want to forget where I came from.

Gelayne has remained sober for eight years now and she continues to be faithful to her program of recovery. Speaking openly and honestly while granting permission to reveal her association with AA, she mentioned that she is attending university and maintaining a solid program of recovery:

I talk to my sponsor, I go to, to groups and the thing I love about school is in my papers I can release myself into my papers too, and I'm not put down for it, in fact they're shocked to hear what I've been through my whole life um and, and to see me um coming into school and um you know for a while all I did all I knew what to do was just you know to live with it and it was like I knew a problem was there but I would, I would kind of view it like 'what kind' you know I would try and take it outside of me and put it and look at it instead of saying that I well that it's me, when I could actually try and put a fact to that problem than I realized that it was not me, that was forced on me, it was put into me some way or another and it was up to me to, to try and get it out and ah with the Steps I think that's what really helped me was the fact that um when I realized sicker is better to be in AA because you get it faster...

That statement with regard to 'sicker is better' expresses the place where Gelayne was at eight years ago compared to where she is today. Gelayne still struggles to come to terms with her place on her healing journey. There are days she feels as though she is doing well yet it seems at other times to not be progressing as quickly as she would like. Re-spiraling has definitely been a factor in Gelayne's recovery. She stated:

I still I would say that from the beginning it feels like I'm just beginning in my path um...it's hard to describe, it's like I get three, I get like three or four steps way ahead and then all of a sudden, bam, something happens and I'm right back to square one. There are times I, I, I feels so happy I can just float off the ground and, and then there are days that I just want to give up so bad, just say, 'to Hell with this all, 'cause I don't need this, if this is what it really is' and sometimes I do feel like that even reaching sobriety and coming into the dominant society is, is another cruel experience.

Honoring the Wound

Being present in the moment is a difficult place to 'be' for most First Nations people who have survived the residential school experience. Starr described moving through her emotions:

it's you know, it's like a roller coaster, hey, and some days I'm a lot stronger and you might feel a lot stronger and I can talk about it and be ok and then there's days when you just feel really vulnerable and raw and emotional and if I if it comes up and then you know but the thing that I've learned is if I do that, and if I break down and if I cry, it's ok and I'm not saying 'but I came all this way', you know, 'I don't want to go back there; you know....it's circular, no it's not about going back there, totally, being, being, being right here, it's about being right, it's about being present and honoring that where you're at and honoring that sadness, that guilt, that grief, that shame and , and letting go and you know....

Carmen spoke of having a very strong traditional family now and that her way of honoring her wounds are expressed in her cultural ways:

we have sweat lodge, we are all pipe keeps and we all um we all come together and we taught our boys the songs...so we support each others this way and now we're beginning to ah accept the gifts given to us that um we can interpret dreams...

Carmen explained further:

so I'm starting to recognize these gifts but my original healing and everything that I represent today comes from the north and from the south, so Medicine Wheel is all we have now, it's all we have and it's something that I've learned to really um respect in even in my own, you know...

Since striking out on her healing journey, Elizabeth has been privileged to share her gifts with others in both a teaching and personal healing capacity. When asked what she does to honor her trauma, grief, guilt, shame and anger, Elizabeth said that she preserves her traditionalism through spiritual and cultural accomplishments:

Well, I, I am a pipe carrier and I have and I, I'm a sweat lodge, I carry the pipe in the sweat lodge and I go many different places and I consider that a blessing and a healing rather than a job, I have a lot of, ah like when I came into the university here, similar to that, I did one just a while last month...I did one with medical doctors....

Akin to Elizabeth, Eddie's expression of honoring the soul wound is demonstrated in his work by helping others on their journeys to recovery and holistic health. He is a compassionate man and sees the need to encourage those he meets on a daily basis:

residential school issues are just coming up now, it's been hush-hush for a lot of years and ah I'm glad I have a part in it ...a lot of the clients are amazed what they don't know about themselves...ah we just tell them our story and, and they relate to it and a lot of them are in, you know, they're so fascinated about what they learn about themselves looking in to their history, their own past, and ah when we start we tell them ah it's going to hurt you know, it's going to hurt physically and mentally you knew and a lot of them go through that experience, the pain...and just to think about it you know a while, a whole country of Native people have grown up that way...

Each of these five co-researchers came to the places they are at in their healing journeys by establishing themselves firmly within their traditional niches. From a physical and emotional state of fear Eddie, Carmen, Gelayne, Starr, and Elizabeth have made strides forward and continue to honor their history and look towards promising

futures. There were expressions of trepidation for those survivors and intergenerationally impacted individuals who have not yet found their place on the healing path; concern rested particularly with expectation of the monetary redress which is being doled out from the Canadian Government.

Monetary Redress as a Form of Healing

Along with the talk of healing, monetary redress became a focus and Eddie was not reticent in speaking to that subject. He stated that First Nations residential school survivors require a lot more than simply getting money handed to them with a hollow apology. Speaking to the issue of monetary redress as a means of healing, Eddie stated, "...and the government wants to know what they can do about it. The best thing they can do is spend more money on these healing programs...".

Eddie spoke about the 'restitution factor' wherein the Church and government offered money to the survivors to pay them for all the physical and psychological hardships they endured while attending residential school. Eddie was adamant about what he thought monetary redress would do to the victims who do not yet understand what the healing process is all about:

oh, of course though, it'll do more damage, it'll do more damage unless ah that individual has ah financial counselling, you know somebody to take care of his money eh, but it'll be the same old story, you know, go to the nearest ah liquor store outlet, spend their money, give their money away. Ah, it'll be the same, it'll do more damage. There's this one individual, ah today, she got nearly a hundred thousand dollars because of residential school, she's been drunk ever since, she has left her family... well it was when she didn't have any money she had to rely on her family

and her welfare....so it will do more damage...

Elizabeth expressed her own thoughts of monetary compensation for abuses done to First Nations people and at one point she revealed her own experiences of having gone through the interviews to make a claim for her self; because of her healing journey and her ability to manage her money, she felt justified in claiming. Elizabeth also spoke about a very close friend of hers who has yet to start a healing journey and who was expecting to receive almost forty thousand dollars for financial redress:

she's getting some money from the boarding school thing, she's getting nearly forty thousand and I thought to me nearly forty thousand is not that much, it's not even a, it's, it's a year wages for somebody that's not making, it's kind of mediocre, it's a little better than the lowest ah but it, it's not all that good, nearly forty thousand and that's all they're, that's all she's getting and her life is totally messed and ah so her children, it went on to her children...so I think the government is overlooking what it has done to us trying to um justify itself with nearly forty thousand to ah....

Gelayne plans to file a claim for all the injustices done to her in residential school and agrees that being grounded in the healing process would help to alleviate financial abuses:

I, I, just thought I'm going to use it, I'm going to use it but it still doesn't take away the pain of what happened...what you're going to see is when we get all paid, you're going to see a lot more deaths, because it's just like giving a loaded gun...

Ever mindful that the government monies is minor compensation for all the damage done to First Nations people, damage starting with the treaties, Gelayne's expressive analogy of financial redress as 'just like giving a loaded gun' certainly punctuated the issue.

Worlds Coalesce: Integrating Healing Practices

Eddie, Carmen, Gelayne, Starr, and Elizabeth all favored synthesizing traditional healing practices with non-traditional healing practices. The traditional healing practices they identified included Medicine Wheel, sweat lodge ceremonies, face painting and Powwows; each co-researcher acknowledged non-traditional healing practices to include one-on-one counselling, AA, and other forms of psychotherapeutic/transpersonal healing. The co-researchers agreed that most First Nations people live in a world of multiple realities, and it would prove ineffective for First Nations individuals to simply get non-traditional healing or traditional healing on its own; the majority of First Nations people may cling to a valued intrinsic part of their own culture while living within the boundaries of the other culture. At the very least the greater number of First Nations people move between both cultures thus it becomes necessary to synthesize healing practices.

When queried about his feelings about blending healing practices Eddie remarked:

I, I think well both, both sides helped me a lot, the non-traditional helped me to understand where, where I, I had, I had, had grown up to be, eh, the type of individual that I had, that awareness was brought to light by the by the non-traditional type and the traditional, the traditional ah part of it is you know learning about my values eh, ...so ah I've learned to have different valued from my ah my culture, eh, ah from both sides, so the education part of it was good for me.

Eddie also expressed how he thought the combination of traditional and non-traditional healing practices would be of assistance for those who were living in the aftermath of residential school, he explained:

Ah the cultural part of it ah would be a personal healing eh, the non-traditional ah, well of course well where, where we're living today has, has to do with ah well you have to you know, well you have things to get around today, you have to have to have money to live, ah you have to we counselors, but, that, then the, the, the part of is ah see a counsellor, a Native, a non, a non-Native person counselor does not know the values of what you know the Native you know would, see, they, they, they, they see it from a western perspective so you have to go back to the cultural part of it. Ah, our, our ah our values, our well our healing is based on the spiritual, physical, mental, and emotional the Medicine Wheel, yeah, and so if one of them is ah missing it affects the rest, eh, you're going down the road like with a with a flat tire so to speak so the circle is not complete.

Starr practices both traditional and non-traditional healing practices in her life as well and she gave an example of how it works in her life today:

traditional I think is holistic and when I hear non-traditional it, to me I interpret, I interpret that as um, um more behaviours and changing thinking so you look at the Medicine Wheel, it's the, it's the body, your patterns of behaviour and it's the mind... um I guess when we um when my niece passed away, um I, um an elder on our reserve talked to my partner and told him that um 'cause we were just we were just devastated and drained and um he said for um for us to come and he'll, he'll do a ceremony with us; so we went to his house and he um he did, he did a ceremony with us, and he painted our faces and I went in there and I hadn't ever experienced that before so I went in there not knowing what we were going to do but I had a lot of respect for the for the, this couple and I knew that they're um they had the best,

they're they had the best intentions for us and their hearts were heavy for us and when we went in there we were just devastated and when we went in there and praying and singing and going through that ceremony and then leaving and just feeling a little bit lighter, feeling like you could breathe you can breathe from farther than just those short breaths and so I guess that would be you know the traditional part of it

Crying, Starr went on to say:

and the non-traditional part is just um just talk, there's people talking, people talking with you and just the um I think what really and I don't know it it's non-traditional but what was really helpful was um people telling us stories...that was really, really helpful and just um just talking to people...

Carmen revealed that along with practicing her traditional ways of healing, she took advantage of non-traditional healing practices; she had talked with a counselor over a three year period of time as she came to grips with the abuses she suffered in residential schools. Through personal healing Carmen includes her family in what she has learned and continues to learn:

I can talk, we talk to our kids about it when we're now we've starting our own healing I get a sense of what boarding school did to us and now I'm teaching them um the pride and the history in um what it, what it, what it was supposed to have been in traditionalism so by talking about it and um by teaching them um just, just, just what the entire epistemology of First Nations people that this is the way it should have been, not that way; now we are starting to sift out what's Catholic and, and what's not, not Native and taking what's best for us now

Carmen gleans daily healing through her role in counselling clients who are deeply embedded in the Catholic religion and who have experienced the abuses at residential school. Carmen can claim continuous personal healing through the programming and method of programming where she works because she shares herself with clients and continues to heal through those interactions by:

um using myself as an example always and I always say I will not impose my values or my moral and belief systems on you, I respect what you have, but respect mine too...

Gelayne expressed her opinion on what traditional and non-traditional healing practices meant to her; she stated:

I would say that in the sense of traditional would be the, the smudging, um reaching out to our culture and practicing those ways because when I do smudge I feel very spiritual, I do, I feel very spiritual and that's all I wanted, you know and with AA the only reason I stayed there is because I felt a presence and that's what I like is the fact that they didn't say that this was a Christian based or this is a Catholic based or anything all they said it's a spiritual based program and that's all I wanted to hear and when they said that, that's when I realized that by combining the two, um traditional with the with the AA program that I was going to go much farther that the healing was there, I felt it you know...

Elizabeth embraces the traditional healing practices and agrees that it is very important for her people to acknowledge the need for non-traditional healing as well. She too believes, as Gelayne does, that AA is one non-traditional healing practice that really

works. One example Elizabeth shared with me was how her son and daughter-in-law use their cultural practices for healing but how they also engage in less traditional methods:

my son and daughter-in-law they go to everything the, they've tried everything psychologists, psychiatrists, um Adult Children of Alcoholics, they've tried everything and they're doing a lot better than most people on the reserve...my son is a pipe carrier...

Elizabeth continues to fast from time to time, she goes on vision quests, is a pipe carrier and attends sweat lodge ceremonies; these are her primary traditional healing practices but she has incorporated a simple non-traditional technique:

I found a little um a little therapeutic a something that I that I like, I, I've done several times that really works good for me and it's so simple and it's just free and all, it is, is deep breathing and breathe out for everything like I was fighting with my sister at my mother's wake and I thought, like, like I seen no forgiveness and I was even praying for forgiveness and it wasn't coming and then when I started this deep breathing it just gradually went away real, like I didn't notice...

When thanked for her participation in this research, Elizabeth said:

it's always so for me, it's always healing and like, like I said, it's repeating, and repeating, and repeating so every time I repeat these stories they, I think they get a little healthier.

Even though Elizabeth, Eddie, Carmen, Starr, and Gelayne routinely remember the lived experiences of residential school abuses, they have started to honor the lived experiences of healing towards wholeness.

Chapter Conclusion

Five co-researchers' lived experiences concerning the impact of residential school were illuminated in this chapter. Chapter Four explored six overarching themes which pertained to these lived experiences. It was exposed that all five co-researchers are in the ongoing process of healing beyond their historic trauma. Each individual is seeking personal pathways to spiritual wholeness by incorporating traditional and non-traditional healing practices including the transpersonal approach.

Chapter Five, the following and final chapter, will provide a summary of the themes from Chapter Four. Limitations within the body of research will be addressed and the implications for counselling will be investigated.

CHAPTER V: DISCUSSION

Introduction

This chapter will summarize Chapter Four wherein six major overarching themes were clarified and interpreted; these themes emerged from five co-researchers' candid accounts of their lived experiences of residential school. Further to the summary of themes, limitations of this study will be provided along with the counselling implications this research contributes to the Human Services field. This chapter will conclude with final comments.

Healing practices used by residential school survivors to attain spiritual wholeness was examined in Chapter Four as the study focused on the lived experiences of healing through trauma, grief, guilt, shame, and anger as well as the intergenerational impact of residential schooling. These lived experiences of First Nations people, personally knowledgeable about the phenomenon under study, was examined from a hermeneutic phenomenological point of view in combination with a transpersonal perspective on the recovery process.

Summary and Discussion of Research Findings

Through the lens of an implicated researcher this study was carried out by interviewing five First Nations co-researchers. Once the interviews had been transcribed, a meticulous thematic analysis of the transcriptions was undertaken and six major themes were uncovered. From these themes, rich personal narratives were extrapolated. This study also made inquiries into the healing practices used by individuals who are on a healing journey towards spiritual wholeness. The research questions, '*What has been the lived experience of the trauma of residential school abuse?*' and '*How are traditional*

and non-traditional healing practices mutually applied in the recovery process by individuals who are impacted by the residential school experience?’ were answered by the five co-researchers; they stated that they consider it fundamental to blend traditional healing practices with non-traditional healing practices so that holistic healing can occur. Morrisette (1994) concurs.

Comprehensive introductions to the five co-researchers in Chapter Five preceded the exploration of six major themes. Through these themes narratives of personal injustices emerged. The first of six themes, *Creating the Wounded Disconnected Self*, provided the understanding of how the deep soul-wounding occurred. Untold numbers of First Nations children were disconnected not only from their families but from their spirituality and culture; decimation of spirituality and culture is voiced profoundly throughout this thesis and is congruent with the findings of other authors (Assembly of First Nations, 1994; Chrisjohn, Young, & Maraun, 2005; Dion Stout & Kipling, 2003; Duran, 2006). The first sub-theme, *Being Seized and Disbanding Families* clarified and highlighted First Nations childrens’ experiences as they were forcibly taken from their families and then were abandoned at residential schools. These experiences are also reported in a document written and published by the Truth Commission in 2001.

Sacrificed, abandoned and ensnared inside a silent world, the second sub-theme, details how the vast number of First Nations children were placed into the unfamiliar surroundings in residential schools. They were forbidden to speak their indigenous languages and they could not understand English; their silent world was filled with uncertainty. Examples of this are recorded by Dion Stout and Kipling (2003). It was early in the indoctrination process that *Institutionalized Conditioning and Inhumanity* began.

This, the third sub-theme, addressed how children became conditioned within the confines of residential school. Harsh conditioning became rigidly obligatory through European/Catholic indoctrination. To further the indoctrination all First Nations children, as the second sub-theme explains, they were all *Reduced to a Number* as each child received a special number which was on clothing, bedding, shoes/boots, socks and underwear. Names no longer existed and the individual numbers assigned became each child's identity, "they put your name aside" and "that number stays on you".

In the following sub-theme it was revealed how many First Nations children experienced a *Gross Lack of Nurturing and Nourishment* from the nuns and priests in residential school. Co-researchers reported that ill or injured children were exiled to the top floor of the residential school building and were left alone until they had fully recovered.

The second major theme *Poignant Losses of Family Culture* articulated losses which this study's First Nations co-researchers have all experienced. Other authors (Dion Stout & Kipling, 2003; Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, 1990; Legacy of Hope Foundation, 2003; Morrissette, 1994; Patterson, 1972) have the same opinion. Personal defeats are woven throughout the sub-themes of *Loss of Freedom, Loss of Distinction and Dignity, Loss of Self-Worth through Abuse, Loss of Emotional and Spiritual Connection, and Loss of Comforting Attention*. Expressions of losing emotional and spiritual connections within themselves and within their family and culture became a pervasive theme.

In the third major theme, *Self-Betrayal to Survive*, it was explained in five sub-themes how the co-researchers experienced *Trauma Wounds: Internalizing Self-Rejection*,

Overwhelming Grief, how they were *Plagued by Guilt and Shame* and how *Unrelenting Anger* has played a dominant role in their lives today. While *Learning Manipulative Ways*, three co-researchers acknowledged that due to the need to survive in residential school, they learned to become deviant which paved the way for them to become criminals on the outside. They genuinely believe that they had been provided with all the tools necessary to become criminals once released from residential school.

Trauma wounding began the day the children were seized from their families. Researchers (Almaas, 2000; Chansonneuve, 2005; Cherney, 1990; Dion Stout & Kipling, 2003; Freedman, 2006; Rowell, 2005; Smethers, 2007; Sochting, Corrado, Cohen Ley & Brasfield, 2007; Wells & Jones, 2000; Wesley-Esquimaux & Smolewski, 2004) are of the same mind regarding trauma wounding. The long, arduous days turned into years as trauma wounds festered and today these historic trauma wounds pervade community life “...our community is in crisis ...”, one co-researcher explained. *Spiritual Terrorism*, the fourth major theme involved four sub-themes; *Frozen Fear of God* and *Obey or Go to Hell* gave clear indications that children were taught to literally fear God and obey the doctrine of the Catholic Church. Fearful for their lives, the co-researchers surrendered to the church’s teachings.

The third and fourth sub-themes, *Religious Head Prayers but Visceral Disregard* and *Hating One’s Own Branded Soul* were expressions of indoctrination as one co-researcher conveyed, “I prayed a lot from my head eh, it was more memorization than praying from your heart, eh...”. The “branded soul” became the focus of hate for three co-researchers. Self-mutilation and retaliation towards the ‘self’ for surrendering to the dominant Anglo-Catholic society was reported.

The fifth major theme *Crashed and Burned: The Treacherous Transition* detailed how the co-researchers were unable to blend into the dominant European culture after being released from the confines of residential school and the five co-researchers elaborated how they ended up *Colliding with Addiction*. Once couched within the dominant society the co-researchers explained that they became addicted to drugs and alcohol in order to shut out their psychological pain. Authors (Bowins, 2004; Claes & Clifton, 1998; Dion Stout & Kipling, 2003) agree that substance abuse is a residential school legacy. The remaining sub-theme, *Residential School Remnants and Ever-present Ghosts from the Past*, addresses how emotionally affected the co-researchers still remain. Through rich description it was revealed how the church's indoctrination practices have affected the co-researchers. They stated that they are becoming embedded within their cultural traditions yet they still tend to relapse into the deep-rooted thinking bequeathed to them through the lived experiences of residential school.

Embracing the Spiritual Journey, the sixth and final major theme addressed the psychological remnants of the residential school experiences and how holistic healing is starting to be embraced. The first and second sub-themes *Aftermath: Healing and Re-spiraling* and *Holistic Healing: Embracing the Traditional* provide the reader with understanding into how difficult it has been for the co-researchers to move past the experiences of residential school. The third sub-theme, *Honoring the Wound*, has enlightened the reader that being 'in the moment' and being 'present' has honored each one "where [they] are at". Medicine Wheel, Pow-wow, and sweat lodge ceremonies were discussed as being cultural ways of healing and it was explained how they are being utilized to help heal soul wounds and acknowledge spiritual gifts. Authors who agree

include Assembly of First Nations (1994), Bradshaw, 2005; Claes & Clifton (1998), Dion Stout & Kipling (2003), Duran (2006), France, McCormick, del Carmen Rodrigues (2004) as well as Ryback and Russell-Chapin (1998).

The fourth and final sub-theme enlightens readers about *Where Worlds Coalesce: Integrating Healing Practices*. The co-researchers strongly agreed that it is essential to heal holistically by integrating traditional and non-traditional healing practices and that for themselves, their First Nations spirituality and culture are the pillars of their healing processes. Morrissette (1994) Kirmayer, Brass, and Tait (2000), as well as the Legacy of Hope Foundation (2003) have the same opinion. Implications for clinical practices using the synthesized method of healing practices will be addressed later in this discussion.

Over the course of conducting research, listening to the five co-researchers tell their stories during the interviews, then transcribing the tapes, this researcher was provided with an insight into the residential school experience first hand. It was extremely difficult to transcribe the tapes for any length of time as the emotional narratives were hard to listen to and it was necessary to take time away from transcription. The themes and sub-themes provided a deeper understanding of the co-researchers' residential school experiences and this researcher came away from the study with a great deal of respect and esteem for each co-researcher.

Limitations

An amalgamation of strengths and limitations coexist within this research study; recognition of these strengths and limitations is imperative. Each of the five co-researchers' lived experiences of residential school abuses was significant to the completion of this study. Each individual reflected upon their historic traumas and told

their personal stories of maltreatment in order for this research to go forward. These are considered to be strengths of this study.

Providing further strength to this study, personal involvement as implicated researcher established profound empathic awareness for each co-researcher's lived experiences. The expression 'co-researchers' was allocated to each participant in the study because they too were researching – they were conducting personal explorations of whom they truly were, whom they are and their movement toward essence in recovery. A deep personally solidified connection with the co-researchers developed and this unique involvement was addressed with each one at the outset of the research study; this was done so that there would be no misinterpretations as the study progressed. Due to the credulous relationship that formed, rich data was gleaned permitting powerful overarching and sub-themes to emerge. Offering more strength to this study, replication by other researchers could be undertaken with the provision of the same results.

The deep solidified connection with each co-researcher may be viewed as a limitation as well as a strength suggesting that the released information may be prejudiced. With that in mind, the co-researchers were each provided a transcript of their interview, ensuring that the themes and sub-themes were in fact what each person had meant. Each co-researcher accepted and identified the themes and sub-themes as valid. Another limitation identified was the implication of prior personal involvement with First Nations people as a counsellor; this was seen as an issue that could cloud personal awareness of 'the now' from time to time. Awareness and vigilance was a key factor during those moments to ensure that the feelings did not cloud any results.

Limiting the study was the number of co-researchers who took place in the study. A sample size of five is small but by limiting the sample size there was the opportunity to capture the true heart of phenomenological hermeneutics. On the other hand, however, it prohibited widespread generalizability to the population under study; not every First Nations individual who attended residential school will reverberate with the experiences of maltreatment and abuse. This study was not intended to portray that fact.

Further limitations to this study exist. The co-researchers consisted of five First Nations individuals – one male and four females – and it was trusted that these individuals were in fact telling their own stories and not known stories about their loved ones or friends. Four co-researchers were impacted by the lived experiences at residential school experiences and one co-researcher was impacted intergenerationally by her primary care-giver. There are noteworthy limitations to this study.

Implications for Counselling

Delivery of frontline human services must be congruent with the interests of those who receive them; therefore, engaging in traditional, First Nations socio-cultural, and non-traditional, clinical healing practices, helps work towards a “pluralism and hybridization of models and methods” (Cook, 2005; Kirmayer et al., 2003, p. S17).

Freedom from limitations such as structural violence, racism, and marginalization opens an individual up to the experience of healing in an immediate, holistic, contextual, manner, enhancing a personal sense of wholeness (Bohart, 1993; Ryback, Lakota, & Robbins, 2004; Rybak & Russel-Chapin, 1998). A healing practitioner who embodies trust and has a basic understanding of medicine, harmony, relation, and vision (Garrett & Wilbur, 1999) will be more effective in working with First Nations people particularly

those who are trying to heal beyond their legacies of familial residential school experiences. Dr. Honore France (2004) clearly states that “it is crucial to acquire some knowledge of the issues, such as the ‘fall out’ from the residential school system that affect First Nations clients” (p. 2).

Many First Nations people remain apprehensive because of the treaties and the residential school abuses and place little faith or trust in mainstream therapists working within the dominant culture. Guiding principles of stringent customs must be honored so First Nations people may become willing to embrace the healing journey. France (2004) explains a holistic healing approach which takes into consideration, “cognitive processes, affective processes, social or action processes and spiritual processes” (p. 5) and also elaborates on the importance of including elders in the role of counsellor/facilitator in the therapeutic process. Rupert Ross (1992) concurs stating, “Elders favour the use of instructive parables over direct criticism” (p.173).

The new healing paradigm proposed within the boundaries of Almaas’ *Diamond Approach* (2000) is congruent with the above mentioned criteria for counselling First Nations people. It is crucial for therapists to be comfortable working in both worlds, and can draw on and integrate both perspectives. France (2004) provides examples which can be used within this healing paradigm including the use of drumming, group work within a circle, cleansing, taking nature walks, learning how to prepare four bark medicine, ‘lay hands on’ people along with prayer, and art therapy. Taking nature walks and preparing four bark medicine helps to reconnect individuals to the natural world (France, 2004). Drumming creates an energizing focus for the participating group and provides a reminder for everyone that they are all united in their healing process (France, 2004).

Drumming also creates within the element of sound, the heartbeat of the group and how the group members “strive to reunite with the spirit of Mother Earth” (France, 2004, p. 5).

France (2004) expresses how important it is to promote checking in prior to the healing to find out where each individual is in their day. Checking out with participants is equally therapeutic to their healing in order for them to share what the healing experience has done for them. Within the healing circle, France (2004) proposes that an eagle feather be passed around the group members as they share their thoughts with each other. Every person needs to be heard and by sitting together in a circle, they are able to see each other and hear what each other member of the healing circle says. The circle is a symbol which represents unison and accord among all beings in the universe and that symbolism is enacted over again in sweat lodges, sweet grass ceremonies, pipe ceremonies, meetings and feasts where people gather to celebrate and participate in their spiritual practices (France, 2004).

Brushing off cleanses the participants within the healing circle as they are brushed off and cleansed with cedar (a sacred plant for people of the Northwest) or an eagle feather (France, 2004). In this way, individuals will begin to feel “a greater connection between themselves and their culture ...and empower them to reclaim themselves as First Nations people” (France, 2004, p. 6). Art therapy, specifically carving, is therapeutic and France (2004) states, “with carving, participants project their ideas and thus have a ready canvas of thought and vision that can be utilized for helping” (p.6).

The need to move beyond the trauma of residential school experiences towards wholeness in healing is embodied in the proposed model of spiritual transcendence.

Providing this healing pathway will permit re-tooling of First Nations language over time (Almaas, 2000) and make it more accessible to First Nations people.

Chapter Conclusion

The residential school experience destroyed First Nations peoples' spiritual and cultural values. Respectfully suggested within this dissertation is the message that historical traumatic soul wounds call for a holistic healing process wherein traditional and non-traditional healing practices co-exist to support First Nations people move towards essence in recovery. Regardless whether individuals endured the horrors of residential school first hand or are family members who have been intergenerationally impacted, the fundamental nature of healing is still the same. It has been reported that as generations progress, the intensity of the trauma increases and Duran & Duran (1995) explain, "If these traumas are not resolved in the lifetime of the person suffering such upheaval, it is unthinkable that the person will not fall into some type of dysfunctional behaviour that will then become the learning environment for their children. Once these children grow up with fear, rage, danger, and grief as the norm, it is little wonder that family problems of all types begin to emerge within the family system" (p. 31).

In keeping with the tenants of hermeneutic phenomenology, this researcher believes that there is no conclusion per se. There is, however, a continuation of healing, searching, processing and developing of the human spirit, a transcendent awareness that all things progress and move forward.

The following excerpt from *Black Elk Speaks* (1979) is metaphorically significant with regard to First Nations spiritual strength and regeneration:

...and as I looked and wept, I saw that there stood on the north side of the starving

camp a Sacred man who was painted red all over his body, and he led a spear as he walked into the center of his people, and there he layed down and rolled. And when he got up it was a fat bison standing there, and where the bison stood a Sacred herb sprang up right where the tree had been in the center of the nation's hoop. The herb grew and bore four blossoms on a single stem while I was looking – a blue, a white, a scarlet and a yellow – and the bright rays of these flashed to the heavens (p. 38).

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APPENDIX A

Combined Letter of Information and Consent

You are being invited to participate in a research project having to do with yours, or your family's experiences of residential school. There will be no expenses generated by the co-researchers.

The research study that is being conducted by Dee Dionne, researcher and Masters Student at the University of Lethbridge, is exploring the healing practices of First Nations people who live in the aftermath of the residential school experience. The data collected will be used for the researcher's Master's Thesis. It is the researcher's intention to introduce traditional, or socio-cultural, and non-traditional, or clinical, healing practices that work together in order to develop one culturally progressive healing process.

The research will take place between August 2006 and September 2007 during which time confidential one-on-one interviews will take place in a location of choice and comfort of the co-researcher. The interviews will take from 1 ½ hours to 2 hours to complete and will be audio taped in order to capture the story correctly. The tapes will be transcribed word for word by the researcher. All will be given the opportunity to review the researcher's interpretations of what was actually said. Overall, co-researchers can expect to spend approximately three hours in total involved in the interview process, including a follow-up conversation with co-researchers to make sure the findings are accurately described. Once the data has been published, co-researchers will be invited to share in the discovery of information at a cultural gathering. All co-researchers will be notified of the time and place.

The possibility of co-researchers experiencing some release of buried emotions or emotional discomfort exists, as the topic of living in the aftermath of residential school experiences is very sensitive. Basically, the researcher's questions may trigger dialogue that will allow the co-researcher to reveal hidden emotions and be able to reveal issues that have been buried for many years. There will be one-on-one counselling provided for those who are willing to participate. Counselling will be provided 24 hours per day, seven days per week for the duration of the study; referrals to appropriate counsellors will be provided for continuing care should the need arise.

Participation in this research study is voluntary and prospective co-researchers may choose not to participate. Co-researchers may withdraw at any time without prejudice to pre-existing entitlements (such as treatments) and they may return to the study after a decision to withdraw. The co-researcher's signature below (or tape recorded authority) indicates that they understand that his/her participation is voluntary and that he/she is free to withdraw at any time.

The information gathered from this study is important and will be used for the good of First Nations people. The co-researchers will be given a copy of the Combined Letter of Information and Consent and any other written documents. There is no condition stated to the effect that by signing the form, (or tape recording authority) that the co-researchers are waiving any legal rights and participants do not have to answer any questions that make them feel uncomfortable or that they find to be objectionable.

The researcher will be using a hand-held analog or digital audio tape recorder to gather information from the co-researcher during the interview. The co-researcher will be

understand that conditions such as my revealing harm to me, to others, or revealing issues of child abuse will breach that agreement and the appropriate authorities will be notified. I understand my rights as a co-researcher in this study and the researcher has offered to explain any complications or possible risks; I understand that any risks may include psychological discomfort. I understand that measures have been taken to minimize such risks, as counselors will be available to me when and if I need them during the study. In the unlikely event that I do become ill as a result of this study, I understand I cannot seek monetary compensation from the researcher or anyone affiliated with the study. I understand, however, apart from above mentioned complications, that I will be given a one-time payment of twenty dollars (\$20.00) to go towards travel expenses or child care costs to be paid at the completion of the study. I understand that I may contact the University of Lethbridge Ethics Board, the researcher, or the committee supervisor at any time concerning any questions or concerns I may have about this study.

I acknowledge that Dee Dionne, Masters student/researcher, has given me information about this study and has told me about my rights concerning my participation in this study. I understand that the information I give will not be exploited.

I sign this Combined Letter of Information and Consent (or acknowledge it verbally) voluntarily and willingly.

I have received a signed (tape authorized) copy of this information and consent form.

Date: _____ Time: _____

Signed: _____
(Co-researcher or Authorized Representative)

Signed: _____
(Investigator or Authorized Representative)

Witness: _____

I consent to this interview being audio-taped

Signed: _____
(Co-researcher or Authorized Representative)

Witness: _____

APPENDIX B

Demographic Information

Date _____ Participant ID# _____

Male ___ Female ___ Age _____ Married ___ Single ___ C/L ___ Separated ___

Ethnicity _____ Race _____ Children Y ___ N ___ # _____

Ages _____

Home location _____ Lived there all your life: Y ___ N ___ /Where _____

Parents ___ # ___ Brothers ___ # ___ Sisters ___ # ___

Grandmother ___ # ___ Grandfather ___ # ___

Ages: Parents: (M) ___ (F) ___ Brothers _____ Sisters _____ Grandmother _____

Grandfather _____

Did you attend residential school? Y ___ N ___ If yes, when _____ and where _____

Did your parents attend residential school? Y ___ N ___ If yes, when _____ and where _____

Did your grandparents attend residential school? Y ___ N ___ If yes, when _____ and where _____

Employment _____ Special Skills _____

Education history _____ Driver's License # _____

Addiction history (if any) _____

Current Health Status _____

Dreams and goals _____

Additional Information _____

Comments _____

Print Name _____

Sign Name _____

Witness _____